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## Farmers’ Strategies and the Constraints of Organic Fruit Drying in the Kayunga District of Uganda

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### Abstract

This study investigates the strategies of farmers and the constraints of organic fruit drying in Kangulumira Sub County of the Kayunga district of Uganda.

Commercial solar drying of fruits such as pineapple, papaya and jackfruit started in the late 90s in this sub county. Most of the fruit drying farmers or processors are small to medium landholders and posses land between 2–4 acres. Farmers dry fruits using simple solar dryers which are made of a wooden frame covered by transparent polythene sheets.

As fruit drying does not require extra physical strength, many women and old age farmers are involved in this activity. Fruit drying is mostly a seasonal activity and during off seasons the dryers mostly remain idle and the labourers are diverted to other agricultural activities.

80 % of the farmers grow fruits for drying in their solar driers and if more fruit is needed, they buy from other farmers. The remaining 20 % of the farmers (can be called ‘processors’) do not grow fruits and therefore buy all the fruits for drying.

The important strategy practised by fruit dryers are to dry fruits (pineapple) of all sizes during peak harvesting season and during the off season dry only the small sizes. 53 % of the fruit dryers were women and as such fruit drying plays an important role in reducing the economic dependency on men.

Drying of fruits is a value addition and provides an additional and stable income to the household. Furthermore, it increases the shelf life of the fruits which otherwise would have been wasted or would have fetch very little value during peak harvesting season. Unaffordability of the driers, unpredictable weather conditions, lack of knowledge about fruit drying and lack of trust to the exporting company were the important constraints identified by the farmers. In addition to increased role of women in agriculture and decision making of the family, fruit drying has also brought more cohesion among farmers and increase the savings of the families for reinvestment in solar drying or on other activities.

**Keywords:** Farmer strategies, fruit drying, organic fruit, solar drying