



Tropentag, October 6-8, 2009, Hamburg

“Biophysical and Socio-economic Frame Conditions  
for the Sustainable Management  
of Natural Resources”

## Opportunities and Constraints at the Processing Level in the Fruit Drying Industry in Uganda

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### Abstract

In Europe, the demand for organic tropical dried fruit such as pineapple, mango and banana is big and increasing. Uganda is one of the countries exporting large amounts of these products, but unable to meet the demand in Europe. This research investigates the opportunities and constraints faced by the fruit drying companies at the processing level.

There are about 15 fruit drying companies in Uganda, of which a few are big and the rest small. The constraints faced by the small companies are primarily the lack of money for investment, small drying capacity and difficulties in finding buyers who are interested their small production. They furthermore have little knowledge about marketing and less experience in running a business.

The bigger companies have fewer problems, the major one being the long period of time it takes to convert conventional out growers into organic. Some companies are run by NGOs and the management here put less effort into making the business efficient and profitable.

Most companies use hybrid cabinet dryers, which has biomass burners to heat up the air. However, many have experienced the fruit being flavoured by the smoke and becoming unmarketable. One company uses simple solar driers which are very environmentally friendly since only solar energy is used. However, large amounts of fruits are wasted when the weather is not favourable.

The seasonality of pineapple is also a problem for companies and out growers. In the high season the companies cannot process all the pineapples and in the low season they cannot always get enough. Cheap and easy technologies which can induce pineapple flowering throughout the year have been developed and introduction of this technology could help both companies and out growers to optimise the utilisation of the fruit.

The government of Uganda is currently fighting malaria by spraying DDT in certain areas. This possesses a big threat to the entire organic sector in Uganda and may also affect the fruit drying companies.

**Keywords:** Fruit drying, organic fruit, processing, solar drying, Uganda