

UGANDAN FARMERS' DIALOGUE

Kampala 14th – 16th Dec 2017

Through a newfound sense of purpose, provided by Initiatives of Change, the Farmers' Dialogue has grown out of a commitment to work with farmers in various countries all over the globe. This year's Ugandan Farmer's Dialogue was supported by Initiative of Change Sweden, Namasuba College of commerce and the Kawami Agro. Processing enterprises. It attracted farmer helpers, including the equity bank (holding agricultural loans), manufacturers and sellers of agricultural inputs, representatives of the local government and policy makers, and importers and exporters of agricultural products.

The Uganda Farmers' Dialogue commenced on the 14th Dec 2017 and lasted for three days, with participants from Kenya, Somalia, Chad, Sweden, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Sudan including others.



The conference was held at Millennium Hotel, Entebbe Road, Kampala. 270 farmers and farmer helpers had registered to attend. We were unable to accommodate all and totalled 213 participants, a great outcome. Among these were students studying agricultural papers from several agricultural Colleges and Universities.



The themes this year were:

- Increasing food and human security
- Increasing food production and environmental protection
- Enhancing farming income through Agri-Business and the use of modern technology

Welcome remarks were made by Hajji Jamil Ssebalu who is the President of Ugandan Farmers' Dialogue. He welcomed old and new members and encouraged them to keep up the hard work. He recognised a number of personalities who have been important pillars for the Farmers' Dialogue work.

Recognised individuals included Mr. Sempala Haruna from Gomba town, who joined Farmers' Dialogue 9 years ago and was one of the participants of the International Farmers' Dialogue organised in Kenya. He began his initiative by growing trees, and then managing cattle and is now milling cattle feed.



Mr. Hassan Mohamed is a member of Initiative of Change in Sweden. Mr. Hassan is the main sponsor for this year's Ugandan Farmers' Dialogue. He was warmly thanked for supporting Africa all the way from northern Europe. He explained his significance in helping Africa understand how to work with other people especially through the tools and overall values of the Initiatives of Change network, as well as with the collaboration with Farmers' Dialogue Africa.

Hajji. Nakabaale Hassan, the Director of the Uganda Retirement Benefits Authority represented the minister of agriculture and the animal industry Hon Ssempijja who could not attend because of an urgent cabinet meeting in Entebbe State House. Hajji Nakabaale expressed his gratefulness for the opportunity to come, and said the theme was so befitting to the conference. He shared his reasons for coming into the Farmers' Dialogue by saying that most of the clients for the retirement office are elderly people who eventually retire in farming. Despite their retirement package they do not have any farming skills and the funds they have eventually run out. For this reason, the older generation is a target group in great need of assistance. Hajji Nakabaale continued by saying that the government is keen on supporting farmers, as they realize that the increasing population needs strengthened food security. He appealed them to improve quality and to add value so that we get more profit out of the agricultural products as well as increasing feeding capacity.000

On behalf of the government, Hajji Nakabaale thanked the Uganda Farmers' Dialogue for mobilising and educating the farmers. He thanked Jamil Ssebalu for all the effort and assured him that the government would start supporting the Uganda Farmers' Dialogue through NAADS and all other government programmes. He also thanked the Initiative of Change Sweden for the support and encouraged Hassan Mohamed to bring more seminars of this kind. He thanked Namasuba College of Commerce.

Mr. Mukwana Andrew is Chairman of Initiatives of Change Uganda and a member of Ugandan Farmers' Dialogue. He is a teacher by profession but also a farmer in Mbale, eastern Uganda. On this occasion he shared his general experience with the international Farmers' Dialogue and Initiative of Change and he presented a background of IofC through the lens of the four value pillars; Purity, Honesty, Love and Unselfishness. He talked about what is right rather than who is right and drew fascinating examples and parallels to the 2nd World War. He explained the different opportunities under IofC and how people's lives can be transformed using the four pillars. His major focus was on education, youth empowerment, farming, farmers and teacher's organisations, women creators of peace, and many other benefits from IofC. Furthermore, Mr. Mukwana conveyed an apology on behalf of Madam Dorothy Tingu who could not join us because of other commitments but gave us all the blessings. Madam Dorothy Tingu is the founding member of the Uganda Creators of Peace and Initiative of Change. She is also a founding member of the Ugandan Farmers' Dialogue. A retired secretary who has given all her heart to the Initiative of Change network. We greatly appreciate her work.



Mrs Esther Nankinga, head of the small scale industries – Inter Cottage Industries Uganda- talked about value addition on farm products to increase profitability. She talked about benefits of registering products under Uganda National Bureau of standards to capture the International market without barriers. She encouraged people to acquire the necessary skills to increase the value of production to meet the existing market demand. She emphasised the issue of branding and proper packaging of products and encouraged farmers to learn from other, copy and in this way, improve.

Mr. Haruna Sempala Sengendo from Butambala started by explaining how he became a member of the Uganda Farmers' Dialogue in 2008, through connection with Hajji Ssebalu Jamil. He told how Kenya international Farmers' Dialogue,

where Hajji Ssebalu Jamil sponsored him, helped him acquire necessary knowledge about farming. How, because of this newfound knowledge, he started a Farmers' Association where they planted 1000 pine trees. Later he began rearing cattle and growing coffee. He shared the benefits he gained out of his commitment to farming and encouraged others to begin viewing farming as an investment. Finally, he advised farmers if they are to succeed, to sit down and plan well before venturing into commercialised agriculture.

Mr. Muwonge Hamza, a cassava farmer from Luwero then concluded by summarising the day's presentations and closed the first day.

Mrs. Juliana Swai from Tanzania spoke about good farming practices to preserve the soil. She expressed the possibility for farmers to kick out, to lift themselves out of poverty, from their lives through commercialised farming. She urged farmers to train other farmers using the skills acquired in this Farmers' Dialogue. She then requested the Farmer's Dialogue network to visit Tanzania because there are plans to organise a Tanzanian Farmers' Dialogue. She concluded her presentation by sharing, she had shared her working skills with farmers from India, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Mr. Majak Deng, from South Sudan, introduced himself and expressed his appreciation for being a part of the Uganda Farmers' Dialogue. Mr. Hamza Ali Youssouf Mohamad from Chad loved the Ugandan climate and encouraged the farmers to use this God given resources as a pathway out of poverty. Mr. Kome Isaac from Kenya motivated farmers to work together under the umbrella of the Farmers' Dialogue and Initiatives of Change to transform the lives of others. He shared how he has benefited from this network of Farmers' Dialogue.

Other notable farmers were Hajat Jamila Nalweyiso from Butambala. The lady who hosted the International Farmers' Dialogue on her farm in Butende (on the border between Butambala and Masaka) and served them with a whole bull!

Jim Wigan (U.K), Phil Jeffery's (Australia) and Claude Bourdin (France) were unfortunately unable to attend because of short notice and great distance. Duncan and George from Kenya were also unable to attend.

Hajji Jamil Ssebalu recapped on the presentations of the first day. He echoed the key points of the different and varied presenters. He then invited one of the Ugandan farmers to share his farm experience with us.

Mr. Otim Richard talked about his farming experience, skills and projects he has undertaken. He has been engaged in goat rearing as a major investment in Northern Uganda and he now has 160 goats on his farm and employs a few staff to manage and look after them. He started off with 10 goats and now he owns a few herds and expects to start selling them after a period of five years. In this way he will be able to earn many Uganda shillings. He also shared with us his knowledge and experience in poultry rearing. He explained that the returns from poultry are quick and lucrative if taken as an investment. He further explained about the market need, for Poultry products.

Dr. Mugume Kenneth discussed the Aleosha Organic ingredients required by Aleosha Organic Health Products and explained the different need for farmers to supply them with, Hibiscus, Rosemary, oregano, thyme, prunus, warbugia, stevia, moringa, Kamyu, Lutungotungo. He further explained the degrading effects of normal drugs and how Aleosha Organic products detoxify the body and restores body health. They have specialised herbalists and they follow the medical procedure to test and treat people as required. They visit and supply farmers with seedlings and farming advice on post-harvest handling of the products they use.

Mr. Hassan talked about his country Somalia and the farming practices being done in his mother country. He told of the technology being applied in his country and emphasised that even Europe needs food import from Africa. He encouraged people to fully develop their farms to have food for themselves and more to sell. He then switched focus onto the four pillars of Initiatives of Change (IofC) and clearly mentioned what those pillars mean to him. Mr Hassan said:

“it was like I was walking in the darkness until the mid-90s when I encountered those IofC principles”

He shared with us how he practices a “time of silence” every day, finding guidance from the Almighty/Allah and getting clarity step by step. It was interesting to listen to Mr. Hassan because he was able to challenge the participants about the four pillars (honesty, purity, unselfishness and love for all mankind). He also mentions that Hajji Ssebalu Jamil was the reason behind the sponsorship of the Farmers’ Dialogue by Swedish Initiative of Change. Jamil dedicated his life to work for the common good and he committed to being an ethical person. Hassan continued by explaining the essence of sharing what you have and quoted Ghandi by saying; “Be the change you want to see in the world”. Hassan expressed that IofC is about personal transformation and about acceptance of our wrongdoings in order to build a better and more peaceful future for all.

Mr. Hassan then shared a short story from his life. “A Somali man came to me one day and asked me this question: ‘Can you forgive your enemy?’ I answered that, ‘I have no enemy’. ‘Are you a madman’, my friend asked? The man continued: ‘You see, your clan and my clan are killing each other in Somalia...do you not have any bad conscience about it?’ I replied, ‘Well, I am not involved in the war in Somalia...I am far away from there’. The man then said, ‘Yes, but if you think about it, don’t you contribute in any way materially, verbally, emotionally or even by keeping silent when you are aware of what your clan and my clan is doing in our home country? Think about it my friend.’ “I then realized that, he was somehow right. I was involved in the war by being emotionally involved and thus partial and biased to my clan. I then looked at this man in front of me and thought about his initial question and realised he represented my enemy. I accepted this and decided to forgive him and also asked for forgiveness from him, for I realised that I too represented his enemy. A long conversation developed and we discussed how one can be involved indirectly in a war without even being truly aware of it. This situation helped me a lot in my understanding of war and peace.”

Hajji Simwe Sulaiman is the western region coordinator for the Uganda Farmers’ Dialogue and he also works with the Makerere University. His area covers the Rwenzori Mountains. He started off by appreciating the organisers of the Farmers’ Dialogue for such conferences which links farmers across the world in dialogue. He expressed the importance of these dialogues as they bring together ideas and ways to improve their livelihood through Agriculture. He re-echoed the calling of farmers to respond towards their calling of feeding the world and as well fighting poverty and hunger out of their country. He emphasised that people must change their mindset and begin to look at farming as a major source of income and he encouraged farmers to add value on their products to maximise profits. More concern was put in teamwork and working under one farmer umbrella to address the challenges of farmers.



Mrs. Esther Nankinga (Uganda), the chairperson of Inter Cottages, praised the farmers for their unity and responses made in this year’s Farmer’s Dialogue. She further challenged farmers to unite in feeding the world and to improve their livelihood through Agri-Business. She shared her experience and achievements in farming and said mechanised farming is the only way to improve agricultural performance. She advocated for the irrigation method to overcome the unpredictable weather and prolonged drought across the continent. She emphasised on quality products and good farming practice to preserve the soil so as to increase our productivity. Her major interest is value addition on the farm produce to increase value of the products. She later concluded the conference with her presentation and called for a continued effort to address the challenges of farmers globally and wished all farmers good deliberations in their struggle.

The conference was closed by Sheik Abdullah. He is the coordinator of the Farmers’ Federation and has helped the Uganda Farmers’ Dialogue immensely, especially in Linkages. He applauds to farmers to farm ethically noting that this is the only way they would make sure to succeed. Both Dr Jamil and Hassan promised to continue supporting Farmers locally and globally as food security and human security is interdependent issues and should be address both at the same-time. All agrees that conflict starts with a lack of sufficient food security. The conference was closed in high spirits and with hope for the future.

Overall, people asked for the dialogue to be taken to their respective regions looking for the ways forward. At the International level we now have invitations from Tanzania and South Sudan so far. At the local level, we have Mbale, Eastern part, Rwenzori, Western part and 4 places in Eastern and central region. All those in Uganda who have invited the Farmers' Dialogue have promised to get some funding for those people who want to visit their farms. In addition, Hajat Jamia has given a bull to the Farmers' Dialogue. Dr Jamil promised to continue to support farmers in general but mentioned the need for more voluntary workers and mentors for the young generations who want to learn to farm. Dr Jamil, Andrew and Hassan emphasized the need for farming schools in Africa and particularly Eastern Africa. All agreed that getting the right education for farmers is an essential tool for Africa's young population. More training and sharing information to strength farmers will be necessary to overcome some challenges.

The Inter Cottage Cooperative Society is a local Non-Governmental Organisation in Uganda registered under the Ministry of Cooperative and Marketing. It brings together all owners of small industries that produce on small, scale mostly in homes. These are called cottage industries. They include farmers who add value to the produce they get from the farm before selling to the public.

The Government of Uganda has decided to give financial and technical support to the farmers who add value to products though their main organisation called the Inter Cottage Cooperative Society and this covers the whole country.

This organisation is working with the Uganda National Bureau of Standards to regulate the quality of the products made by all these small groups. It has put aside funds to help them test their products so as to get a qualification mark that allows them to sell in super markets. Good firms will also be funded to build their capacity.

We brought them in to show them the farmers we have and to get our farmers to benefit from them.

Hassan and Andrew mentioned the four values; Purity, Honesty, Love and Unselfishness. We had many other people who demonstrated how they had used these values to change their lives especially in the way they are carrying out farming. Mukasa, a beans producer narrated how he had been cheating customers by using a crushed tin to weigh the beans that he sold. The customers would always take only 3 quarters of the real measures. He made money but one day lost all he had made when he was caught by the National Bureau of Standards. This is how he came in a meeting for lofC Uganda and met Hajji Jamil who introduced him to the organisation. Through training he has changed and now makes ethical profits.

The other one was Haruna, a tree, cattle and maize farmer, who also attended the training once in Kenya where he attained some skills and applied them in his farm back in Uganda. Lydia, a bakery operator, and Otim Richard, a goat farmer. Richard met lofC when he was working in Namasuba College of Commerce where he adopted some of lofC ideas from Hajji Jamil that has expanded his goat farming.

This time, we let farmers talk to their fellow farmers and real experiences were shared. Here, Juliana Swai from Tanzania, was also given a chance to talk and share her experience about farming since she joined this organisation (Farmers' Dialogue). Hassan was able to capture a nice video and will share it out. The result is that, other farmers have invited us to go and visit them on their farms. The meeting after the dialogue will be in Mayuge District on 19th January 2018. It will be a three-day event were 600 farmers will be brought together to share their experiences, especially between those who are residents at Mayuge District. These will have a one to one discussion with the Government in order to understand how they can benefit from the state. 20th January 2018 will be Malaba in the Morning and Mbale on Sunday 21st January 2018 in the afternoon. These are border Districts. The people go to Kenya and back but do not benefit out of the produce they sell. What could be the problem? All these issues will be examined on that day.



Thank you all, and best wishes!
Hassan Mohamud and Dr Jamil Ssebalu.

Farmers' Dialogue