

### My Networks in Eastern and Northern Uganda, 2013

By Jacinta Namubiru <sup>1</sup>



Jacinta Namubiru, Network Manager for AgriNet in Eastern and Northern Kenya and manager of AgriFeeds in Tororo, describes how her network is working in 2013.

#### Good Links with Producers and Buyers

My network is based in Tororo but I also oversee some networks in Northern Uganda. I have 38 Information Board Managers who are also TSS Agents. They connect to approximately 30,000 farmers. We specialise in white sorghum, groundnuts, sunflower, maize, soya and cassava. We have good links to many farming groups, these are some examples:

- MAFFA in Tororo who produce groundnuts and sorghum. We link this farmers' group to buyers such as The Busia Child Fund, the Busia market traders and local government.
- We have farming groups in Soroti who supply (sorghum and cassava) to Moses Gichuru in Nakuru and to Nile Breweries.
- In Bugiri we have farmers' groups supplying maize and soya. Our buyers are SEBA foods and AgriFeeds.
- Sere Progressive Associate, is a farmers' group in Tororo, which supplies the network with soya, maize and sorghum.
- We also have an extensive network of farming groups in Northern Uganda supplying white sorghum.

Our main buyers are: East African Breweries, Nile Breweries, Mitungu millers (Kenya), traders, NGOs and companies such as SEBA Foods.

#### AgriFeeds

I am also the manager of AgriFeeds, a sister company of AgriNet, based in Tororo, where we produce animal feeds. We have had a loan to renew our machines and we are now making both chicken and pig feeds. We have a new mill and feed mixer, weighing scales and a small lab to test the feed mixes. With this new equipment we are aiming to get our feeds tested and certified by the Ugandan Bureau of Standards. We will then be able to export them.



Jacinta Namubiru at AgriFeeds, Tororo

#### Transparency, Trust and Trading

In my area of operation we control costs by having a network of trusted agents in the field; this reduces my travelling expenses. We use accurate weighing scales to ensure consistency, transparency and in order to pay farmers a fair price. However we have some challenges like transport. We recently lost a two tonnes of produce from a truck, this was stolen by the transporters as the TSS agent slept in the truck. In order to mitigate against this, we keep a database of reliable transporters and make it clear to the agents that they are responsible for the produce in transit. Another main challenge is capital. Despite some sourcing on credit, and small bank loans, we still need access to more credit in order to do repeat deals because there is usually a delay of two weeks until we get paid. Therefore it is important for us to work in the new phase of TSS and with COB2.

#### AgriNet working with GOAL in Northern Uganda

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) perpetrated massacres and mutilations in the north for nearly two decades. In 2006, the LRA and the Ugandan government signed a truce, whereby the LRA would move its fighters out of Uganda and the people of

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northern Uganda began returning home. Much aid and NGO work has been done here. GOAL is an international humanitarian agency dedicated to alleviating the suffering of the poorest of the poor and it has for past 20 years been providing relief in this area.

Today, GOAL's work in Uganda focuses on getting past the "dependency syndrome", increasing self-reliance and supporting better access to basic services. GOAL brought AgriNet on board because we deal with business and so that we would help to take these farmers from subsistence farming to commercial and collective marketing. For the past three years AgriNet has been training up a large network of agents in Northern Uganda. This year GOAL gave us a contract to sell white sorghum seed to the farmers (through our network of agents) on their behalf at a reduced price, so that after selling the seed we could also market the grain for them and bring it to the buyers (the breweries). Some of the money that we got back from the sale of the seeds helped us to cover our operations in these very remote areas.



Jacinta Namubiru checking white sorghum at Gracelands Farm, Pader

We are now (November 2013) working to organise our first deals for white sorghum from Northern Uganda. This year my network has expanded to the north of Teso, South Karamoja, Agago and Lamo. Not all of my agents are at the same stage of development and doing business. Some are adopting the business ideas and some are still trying to grasp them; it is not easy for them all to understand TSS and we still have a lot of work to do on training them for the Academy deals. We are also training the farmers' groups to farm and market their crops in a commercial way. The crops that my Northern networks are growing are mainly white and red sorghum,

mixed beans, maize and sunflower.

### Information for Academy Deals



Jacinta Namubiru organizes payment in S. Karamoja

To train for the Academy has meant collecting a lot of information about our agents and farmers. This has taken time and much effort on behalf of the whole network. Now most of the information has been gathered, our deal plans have been made and we are submitting pending deals for final registration. I am sure that in the next few weeks I will be able to access the COB 2 funds for the white sorghum deals that we are sourcing for East African Breweries.

The main areas where seed has been sold are Agago, Lira, Kitigum, Pader and Lamo. Right now this is the peak of the season and farmers are collecting sorghum, it is already coming in to the agents' stores where they are bulking ready for pick-up. So in the next two weeks if we succeed to obtain COB 2 we should be able to help farmers to sell their white sorghum. We would be able to market it without COB 2 but we would not be able to market the big volumes as we would run out of operational money.

### What Next?

After the white sorghum harvest we will go onto sunflower and maize. I already have the LPOs from Sigma Feeds for maize and Mitungu Millers for sunflower. These crops will come from both my Northern and Eastern Networks.

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