

Voices from the Field

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) was founded in 1986 by Norman Borlaug, Jimmy Carter, and Ryoichi Sasakawa, to support smallholder farmers in Africa.

Voices from the Field offers an insight into the positive impact and benefits of SAA programs and activities, in the words of the smallholder farmers with whom we work. Through their experiences we continue to learn and improve, working together for a better future for Africa's smallholder farmers.

“My income and livelihood have improved”

The farmer's multipurpose cooperative reaping the benefits of collective seed production

The Bulunguli Farmer's Multipurpose Cooperative is located in the Iganga district of Uganda. A needs assessment was conducted in 2016 as part of an agreement between SG 2000 Uganda and the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), during which many farmer groups requested capacity development in oil-seed crop production. SAA worked with eight of these farmers' groups to form the cooperative, and to support them by delivering relevant training in soybean production and value chain management.

The cooperative incorporates eight groups and boasts a total of 316 members and eight board members. Working across the value chain, the cooperative, which is mainly engaged in the selling and multiplication of soybean, also engages in value addition by making confectionery using cassava and soybean. To enhance market linkages and connections, the group also explores opportunities in grain markets in Kenya and Rwanda, as well as Uganda.

Members of the cooperative receive 100 kg of soybean seed on credit, and are encouraged to double this original investment by growing at least one acre of soybean per season. At the end of each season, members are provided with eight gunny sacks to be used for bulking.

The chairman of the cooperative, Buyinza George, reflects on some of the tangible achievements. ***“From April to July last year, we planted 117 acres of soybean for seed, and bulked 106 tons. In September through to December, we planted 125 acres for seed and harvested 169 tons. We earned a collective revenue of UGX 35,760,000 (about \$9,710) from sales and loan repayments made by members. We are now encouraging other farmers to engage in seed production, because seed has more market value than grain.”***

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Buyinza George (L), chairman of the Bulunguli cooperative, and Namutamba Siida (R), a member of the cooperative, in a soybean field.

As part of the training provided by SG 2000, members were able to benefit from effective practices in oil crop production, and gained an insight into the value chain and marketing. ***“Sasakawa trained us on how to grow seed,”*** explains Namutamba Siida, a member of the cooperative. ***“Selling seed is more lucrative than selling grain, because 1 kg of soybean seed goes for UGX 3,000 (\$0.81) while 1 kg of soybean grain is sold at UGX 1,500 (\$0.40). I harvested 720 kgs of soybean from my one acre of land in the first season and sold it to the cooperative, earning a revenue of UGX 2,160,000 (\$586.95). I was able to buy a cow from the proceeds, and my income and livelihood have improved.”***

