



ALL IS NOT YET LOST, CASSAVA IS AN ECONOMIC POTENTIAL FOR KATINE INTEGRATED FARMERS' DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (KIFDA).

The farmer association Katine Integrated Farmer's Development Association KIFDA started way back in 2007 with 15 groups and had 375 members drawn from three parishes of Ojom, Oculoi and Olwela, in Soroti District. In 2009/2010 KIFDA mobilized its group members and formed an association which was registered and with a membership of 191 members drawn from 15 groups of which 70% were women and 30% male to address and promote increased production, collective marketing, value addition, improved livelihoods and increased income among its members. These farmers were originally small scale farmers and used to produce on small scale, they contribute to the food security of the district. Traditionally, these farmers were known for subsistence production, with just a small surplus for the markets. Besides, they had other challenges such as poor agricultural practices, poor market orientation and lack of value addition capacity. According to the association chair person, they also had a very low bargaining power in the market, receiving low returns for their produce.

The chairperson of the Association further reported that it was risky and many members shunned joining the association, preferring to venture into other small business like selling pancake mostly for the women, selling alcohol, growing sugar canes which were by then the main activities in Ojom parish.

Before the formation of the association most farmers used to sell their cassava individually to local village traders, when they need cash. The majority of the cassava and other produce were normally sold immediately after harvest, in heaps or bags. Since the buyers deal with low quality products at low volume, the prices were generally low compared to the prevailing prices for cassava and maize in the open markets. The sale of small amounts of low quality product meant that farmers have very little bargaining power said Mrs. Ageo phoebe the chair person of Katine Integrated farmers Development association. With the formation of the association, farmers are now able to sell their cassava directly to the association, which has enabled them to earn income and hence send their children to school.

During that time, the major fear was that if one plants cassava, he or she would have wasted time, resources and energy. This was because many people felt that there was no market for cassava on a large scale. Farmers now days get the market before venturing to the enterprise said Mr. Ebiru Michael vice chairperson. Through the association a farmer is guaranteed market and at the end of the day a farmer is able to earn income.



*Picture Members of the marketing committee counting the bags of processed cassava flour*

Currently the farmers are able to bring individual produce to the store for processing which is later collectively bulked. They are bulking up to 7 tons of processed cassava flour a month and with the amazing market linkages established by their own marketing committee, the bulked produce is marketed collectively to Arua, Southern Sudan and have exploited the existing market opportunities in

Soroti. From only processing of the bulk produce, the association is able to realize 300,000/= @ two weeks, meaning that they would have around 600, 000/= per month, and this would at the end of the year result into 12,000, 000/= !

One of the association members said that the formation of the association has helped members to initiate purchase of produce from the community for collective marketing. The association has brought nearer the value addition services and it has reduced on the transport cost to the market. “Most members are now able to buy valuable assets such as land and construct permanent houses within the nearby centers.” said Mr. Acunu Patrick.