

Sorghum puts a smile on Kwale farmer's face

MONDAY, JULY 23, 2018 19:26



Daniel Kitivo at his sorghum farm in Mwangwae village in Lunga Lunga Sub-County. PHOTO | FADHILI FREDRICK



Rising demand for sorghum has led to more farmers in Kwale County turning to the orphan crop to improve their lives.

Statistics from Pamba Viazi (PAVI), a cooperative funded by Base Titanium Limited which helps farmers to improve their living standards, show that the number of sorghum farmers in Kwale County has increased from 33 in 2017 to 771 currently.

Daniel Kitivo, a retired director in the Ministry of Agriculture and a seasoned maize farmer, has found a new enterprise in the crop after disappointing maize yields.

He described sorghum as a cash crop of hope compared to maize which he abandoned because of poor yields and unstable market prices.

Also Read



Enterprise Why you should run your own race at your pace

Enterprise How to ride your business out of turbulent times

"It is a promising crop and I will take advantage of the ready market to increase my acreage," he said, adding that it is a crop of hope because of its high demand and stable price.

He said that sorghum is an important food for livestock, people, and an key ingredient in alcohol.

Mr Kitivo plants the crop on 40 acres located in Lunga Lunga sub-county.

In an interview with the Business Daily at his farm in Mwangwae village, Mr Kitivo said that he plants sorghum in April, harvests three months later and prepared the land for the second crop.

More than 10 casual workers were busy harvesting the crop when we visited his farm recently.

He expects to earn about Sh800,000 from the 40 acres of sorghum in the first harvest.

"I have already harvested 50 bags and I expect more," he said, adding that he looks forward to complete harvesting by the end of this month and preparing land for the second crop.

Mr Kitivo said that he sells a kilo of sorghum directly to PAVI at Sh31. The firm in turn sells the crop to East Africa Breweries Limited (EABL).

READ: [Good yields expected in first sorghum harvest](#)

He was optimistic of better harvest in future because of the new Sila variety that is under trials.

"I planted Gadam but in the next season I will switch to Sila for better production," he said.

Mr Kitivo urged farmers in the county to embrace sorghum farming, saying that the crop will earn them more money and improve their lives.

"There is a ready market for the produce and it's upon us to take up the opportunity," he said, adding that good farming practices will enable farmers to earn more and make them financially stable.

Mr Kitivo urged farmers to plant early, use the right type of fertiliser, and control pests in order to get high yields. He asked the government to provide farmers with subsidised fertiliser to boost production and contribute to making the county and country food secure.

Hamisi Ngema, a PAVI official, said that 1,333 acres were under sorghum countrywide, adding that the acreage was set to increase due to growing demand for the crop.