

FROM THE FIELD SPRING 2021



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ANASTASIA MBATIA

After 17 years of working as a horticulture and business development expert in the private sector, Anastasia Mbatia joined Farm Africa in 2018 as Technical Manager of Agriculture. Based in Kenya, she provides invaluable expertise across all of the countries that Farm Africa works in.

Why did you choose Farm Africa?

One of the reasons was its size. It's not one of those mega NGOs but at Farm Africa you can find experts; we've been known for some time as the go-to NGO in eastern Africa because of this. I wanted to join this team of experts that find solutions to problems.

What does your typical day look like?

My day usually starts with answering lots of questions! I get requests coming in from all of the different projects. At the beginning of every day, I will also look out for potential agricultural threats in each country and, if I find any, I will notify people in that country to be alert. I'll also work on long-term projects such as writing training materials. I juggle many different balls!

What do you enjoy most about your job?

The diversity of the projects and the teams I work with are things I love about my job. Today I'll be talking about ginger, but tomorrow

you'll find I'm talking about sunflowers or cashew nuts. The teams are also very different and I enjoy learning about new cultures. I feel I'm a part of every success at Farm Africa, and - when I go to farms and see the beaming smiles on women's faces, on men's faces and I see healthy children - it makes me sleep better at night!

If you could share a message with Farm Africa supporters, what would it be?

I am talking from the heart when I say thank you so much. Your giving really transforms the lives of the families we work with. Your donations have a long-lasting impact, enabling communities to not be dependent on help all their lives; you start them on a path that is bright.



CHANGE IS BREWING IN UGANDA'S COFFEE SECTOR

In Kanungu, western Uganda, coffee is the fuel of the local economy and a recent Farm Africa survey revealed that women are the backbone of the industry. Despite that, female farmers see little reward from the profits they help to generate.

Even though women do the majority of work involved in growing, harvesting and drying coffee, in most cases men control the marketing and sales activities. This distinction means that often men control household incomes and women are excluded from financial decision making.

In 2019, Farm Africa ran the Coffee is Life UK Aid Match appeal. Our kind supporters gave generously to the appeal and unlocked a total of £242,000 in matched funding from the UK government. These funds are delivering a project in Kanungu that helps women gain an equal footing in the coffee value chain.

Through the project, 160 village savings and loan associations are being supported to unite women to save together and make investments in each others' businesses. More than 2,000 women taking part in the project will also receive training in financial management and leadership skills.

"Farm Africa trained our farmers' group on how to work together as a cooperative. We learnt about village savings and loan associations and were taught to look at farming as a business, where record keeping is essential to monitor progress." Patience – project participant.

Thanks to the skills and knowledge they're gaining, the female coffee farmers of Kanungu are unpicking the myths surrounding their roles in the sector. The coffee gender gap is closing, and change is definitely brewing.



Photo: Farm Africa /Jumba Martin



Our Coffee is Life project is funded by UK aid from the UK Government who matched donations to Farm Africa's 2019 Coffee is Life UK Aid Match appeal.

RAISING A GLASS TO SORGHUM SUCCESS

In the Dodoma Region of Tanzania, many farmers grow sorghum to feed their families. Market demand for sorghum is rising, opening up an opportunity for farmers here to generate an income from this crop. Unfortunately, many smallholders lack the yields and equipment to tap into the commercial possibilities.

In this drought-prone region, hunger is a reality that many families face during the regular dry seasons. During these times, many farmers struggle to grow enough sorghum for their own households. The farmers who do manage to produce good yields often lack adequate food storage facilities, so their produce will rot before it can be used or sold.

It might not be possible to change the weather but, with a few small changes, families who are struggling to get by can transform their farms into thriving businesses.

Farm Africa is helping sorghum farmers like Elizabeth learn the best ways to plant and grow sorghum, as well as introducing them to a seed variety that is drought-tolerant. With better seeds and improved knowledge, Elizabeth and farmers like her have been able to grow a surplus of crops, even in dry conditions.



"I have been using improved sorghum seeds. Before, I was using local seeds and I was planting them randomly. Currently, I plant them in rows. Now that I use improved seeds, I am able to make more income."

Planting improved seeds and adopting better production practices allows farmers to increase their food security, as well as tap into a profitable market.



"The difference in my income means I have been able to build a new house from selling sorghum, as well as being sure of having food. Our current house is made of cement blocks and a corrugated iron roof. Before, we had a thatched grass roof on our house and there was always a lot of dust in the house – now, there is not."

To ensure that farmers' impressive new yields don't go to waste, Farm Africa has linked sorghum growers to cooperatives and warehouses where they can store their produce in protective environments, until it's ready to be sold.

Finally, to guarantee the road to success, Farm Africa is also linking farmers to buyers; many farmers from the project are now selling their sorghum to Tanzanian breweries. Now that's success worth raising a glass to!



A gift of £112 could help more farmers like Elizabeth learn how to grow their incomes, ensuring more success stories like hers across eastern Africa.

FARMERS IN ETHIOPIA SEE THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABOUR

In the Amhara region of Ethiopia, households rely on a 31km long irrigation canal as a source of water for drinking and for farming. Recently, the canal was damaged by a flood, putting the livelihoods and health of 530 families at risk.

Over the past decade, rainy seasons in the region have become increasingly unreliable, leaving more and more farmers in the area dependent on the canal to irrigate their farms. But when the canal was damaged, many farmers like Yimmer Ali, who rely on fruit production to earn a living, began to lose their crops when the dry seasons came.



"Like my neighbours, water was no longer flowing to my farm. I ended up being dependent on rainwater, which has become irregular and untrustworthy. I used to produce a good amount of mangoes, using the sales of them to provide for my family. But after the flood broke the canal, I lost my produce. The rain was not sufficient to get my trees the water they needed so they were not fruitful like the other years and I faced a significant loss. This left me with no profit."

Not only did the damaged canal jeopardise livelihoods, it also meant that households lost their source of safe drinking water, putting them at risk of water-borne diseases.

Unable to pay for the repair of the canal, local farmers came together and attempted to fix it themselves. But lacking the right tools, their hard work didn't pay off.

Hearing of the farmers' efforts, Farm Africa brought in a team of experts to support the repair of the irrigation system and soon water was flowing through the canal again. Yimmer is hopeful for the future:

"Farmers have been able to continue to grow onions and tomatoes since the canal has been fixed. Crop producers are expecting to resume seasonal production. I am sure the harvest next year will be amazing!"

STRONGER TOGETHER: FARM AFRICA SUPPORTERS HELP COMMUNITIES BUILD RESILIENCE

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who donated to our 2020 Winter appeal, helping to raise an incredible £123,000! Your generosity was overwhelming and will go a long way in helping farmers build resilience to crises such as the coronavirus pandemic and desert locust invasion.

In the past year, these crises have presented huge threats to livelihoods and food security across eastern Africa, and some of the communities Farm Africa works with have been more vulnerable than ever.

But, with our supporters by our side, we have been able to redouble our efforts to maintain the momentum of our work and continue improving lives.

Anastasia Mbatia, Farm Africa's Technical Manager for Agriculture, has been working closely with the teams and communities on the ground during this time. She told us:

"I was worried that the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic would bury the vulnerable communities that we work with – but so many of them have surprised us with their resilience. Since the pandemic, we have found new ways of doing things using technology - before there used to be resistance to this but now people are embracing it."

"It's also made the farmers we work with really think about, and prepare for, that rainy day – they are making longer-term plans so they can save for the future. This will prepare them in the event of another crisis. Having savings means they'll be able to continue with their businesses and even continue growing in times of emergency."

Seeing the kindness of Farm Africa's supporters and the resilience of the farmers we work with, we know that no matter what adversities the future might bring, together we will be ready.



A gift of £62 could mean more farmers like Yimmer Ali receive a helping hand to protect their businesses.



Your support could mean the difference between struggling and thriving for farmers in these difficult times. Thank you for all your generosity!

YOUR LIFE-CHANGING GENEROSITY



**IN 2020 WE RECEIVED
£504,000 IN REGULAR GIFTS
FROM DONORS LIKE YOU**

**WE WERE LEFT MORE THAN
£488,000 IN WILLS BY OUR
GENEROUS SUPPORTERS**

**FARM AFRICA RECEIVED
OVER 8,000 INDIVIDUAL
DONATIONS LAST YEAR**

**THE TOTAL GIVEN BY OUR
KIND SUPPORTERS IN 2020
WAS OVER £1.5 MILLION**



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