



# Young farmers find a formula for success - quality grain and a reliable market



Obadiah Mpinga and Bosco Haul, two young farmers in Iringa Region, in central Tanzania, are proving that with hard work and connection to a reliable market, farming can be a rewarding undertaking. Since 2018, they have each been supplying maize to Mama Seki Group, a mid-sized processing plant in Njombe town that produces flour and other maize products. While they are now able to make a steady income from their agricultural ventures, this has not always been the case.

A father of two, Obadiah comes from Masage village in Wanging'ombe District. He began farming in 2005 on one acre, producing about two tons of maize per season, which he would sell in the local market. But prices kept fluctuating. In addition, it was difficult to seek out better markets because transporting small amounts was costly. Middle-men would take advantage of the farmers, paying very little for their produce.

"It was very challenging. Sometimes I would put a bag of maize on my bicycle and ride around, looking for a buyer. I did not always succeed, and there were even times when I sold at a loss because I had nowhere else to take it. Such losses were very painful," says Obadiah.

Then in 2018, he heard that Lucy Yona, who owns Mama Seki Group, was looking for regular suppliers of grain for her mill. As part of the YieldWise program, Lucy had received a credit facility from the Tanzania Agricultural Development Bank to expand her operations and to



**Grainful employment:** With a ready market at Mama Seki Group, Bosco (left) and Obadiah no longer struggle to find buyers for their maize.



**Installation of the new plant is almost complete.**

purchase more maize from farmers. She was linked to the bank by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), which is implementing the YieldWise program in Tanzania.

“I started selling my maize to her, and also buying from other farmers to supply to her,” says Obadiah. “She is very particular about the quality of grain she wants in terms of size, color and moisture content, so I make sure that I only bring the best. She advises the farmers she deals with to use quality seeds and fertilizer, and to handle their maize carefully to avoid aflatoxin contamination.”

Last season, Obadiah supplied 100,000 tons of maize to Mama Seki Group, and was paid promptly for it. With the increased income over time, he has built a house for his family and recently bought a truck for transporting maize. He has also bought two diesel maize milling machines

which he has installed in his village. He is happy that she will soon expand her processing capacity because he will be able to bring in more maize. “Mama Lucy is a great inspiration. One day, I want to be like her.”

For Bosco, having a ready market for his maize and his interaction with Mama Lucy have made a world of difference. For several years, Bosco planted maize in Rupande Village in Ludeva District, but the yield was low and he did not make much money from the venture.

“I used to plant seed left over from the previous season, and then I would sell my maize to middle-men. They paid very little for it, about Tsh1,000 (US\$0.44). If I didn’t have enough money for chemicals to preserve the maize it would become infested with weevils. In 2018, when I heard about Mama Seki and began selling my maize to her, she advised me to use improved seed and fertilizer for my crop. I have learnt a lot from her and my yield has increased from six bags per acre to between 20-25 bags per acre.

One of the biggest challenges for maize farmers is the fluctuation in prices, says Bosco, but supplying to Mama Seki has guaranteed him steady prices. As a result, he has increased his farming operation. In 2019, he planted 16 acres of maize, harvesting 30,000 tons.

“I have bought six oxen for ploughing and 15 donkeys to transport my maize. I have also bought a sheller machine, which makes work much easier. I am able to take care of my family comfortably, for which I am grateful. Growing maize has become a worthwhile venture. My sweat is not in vain,” he concludes.

**Rockefeller Foundation's YieldWise initiative was launched in 2016 with the goal of reducing post-harvest loss in select countries and value chains by up to 50 percent. More than 40 percent of fruits and vegetables in developing regions spoil before they can be consumed.**

**Using a multi-pronged strategy, YieldWise sought to improve millions of rural lives by increasing incomes, increasing the availability of food and protecting finite environmental resources.**

**The initiative targeted tomato and cassava production in Nigeria, mangoes in Kenya and maize in Tanzania.**

**YieldWise Initiative in the maize value chain in Tanzania is coordinated by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).**