



## Mangoes can be a good investment for farmers in drylands

### Notes to broadcaster

More fresh mangoes are eaten worldwide than any other fruit. Processed mangoes are used as dried strips, juice, canned fruit, or pickles (achar). Hence there is a significant demand for the fruit. The trees are hardy and bear abundantly; this means they can be grown on small plots of land, except in higher altitudes. Picking and processing are not more difficult than bananas, and therefore the investment is relatively low for a good income. For example, in Kenya, where mango growing is a popular activity among farmers in marginal lands, one and a half acres, about 180 trees, can deliver an income of up to Sh360,000 a year.

The following story is about a man who learns about the potential profits of growing mango trees. It takes place in an Indian doctor's office, which is part of his house.

### Start of program

**Doctor:** Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out.

**Patient:** (Breathing in, breathing out)

**Doctor:** Say Aaagh.

**Patient:** Aaagh.

**Doctor:** Your chest is clear Mr. Nkomo. After all the years you've been seeing me, you are still as fit as ever. But you seem stressed. I think maybe that is why you are short of breath.

**Jakob:** Well, to tell you the truth, doctor, I am worried about something. The farmers' union has given me the responsibility of investing 2000 dollars (use local currency) in a new crop -- and they want a good return on their money. I have suggested so many crops to them. But they are difficult to satisfy. Have you got any ideas?

**Doctor:** I always say you should not talk on an empty stomach. Why don't you come and sit and have some of my wife's lamb curry that you like so much.

**FADE OUT CONVERSATION.**

**FADE UP ON CLATTER OF KNIVES AND FORKS ON PLATES. FADE IN CONVERSATION.**

**Jakob:** I don't know how your wife makes such a tasty curry! Could you please pass more of that delicious mango achar?

**Doctor:** Mango achar! That's the answer, Mr. Nkomo! Mangoes! You must invest your money in growing mangoes!



**Jakob:** Mangoes? Will mangoes grow in our dry climate?

**Doctor:** Mango trees are tough. You find them all over the world in tropical and subtropical areas. They originally came from my country, India, but they are very adaptable. They grow in very hot, very humid, cool and even very dry conditions. There are many varieties - about 40 species grow in Kenya (use appropriate numbers for your country/region).

**Jakob:** But I am sure they need a lot of attention -- like irrigation and fertilizing?

**Doctor:** (laughing) No, Mr. Nkomo, you mustn't worry yourself unnecessarily. They are no different than any other fruit tree. If it is very dry, they will need some watering when they are just developing from seedlings and when the fruit starts to ripen. If the soil is very harsh, a bit of fertilizer will do no harm. Also, you need soil that can retain moisture for the tree to use when it's dry. But mango trees are a lot hardier than most other fruit trees. And just think of the return on your investment!

**Jakob:** Yes, that's true. People love to eat mangoes. Some people add them to salads. Or dry them. Have you see how people love to eat strips of dried mango? And juice! Mango juice is so refreshing when it is hot.

**Doctor:** Well, there you are. Now you know why more fresh mangoes are eaten worldwide than any other fruit. In India we call it "the apple of the tropics."

**Jakob:** But I still can't believe that I could make a living out of growing mangoes. It must be very difficult to harvest the fruit at the right time and to know how to ripen it.

**Doctor:** The seedlings will start to bear fruit within two and a half to four years. You pick them when they are still green, either by hand or by cutting them off with long-handled shears. Then you take them to the shed and wash and pack them. But the local extension officer will give you all the information you need -- it's much like picking and processing bananas.

**Jakob:** Now I know how Mr. Letsema could afford to buy a new car. I saw him swanking around the town in it last week.

**Doctor:** Oh yes! He's one of my patients. He always pays his bills on time. And I know he has one and a half acres of mango trees in his orchard. Someone told me that last year he made Sh360,000 (use local currency) just from that small patch of land. No wonder he has a new car.

**Jakob:** Thanks doctor. You have solved two problems at once. My stress and my financial problem! And I had a good curry lunch thrown in with delicious mango achar. (laughing)



**FADE OUT LAUGHTER.**

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**Information source**

Mangoes now a high earner in drylands, by Mwangi Mумero. Kenya Daily Nation, May 19, 2005.

