# english black

# Package 90, Script 9

April 2010

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**Sack farming: Unlimited vegetable harvest!**

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### Notes to broadcaster

Scientific reports published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007 say that rapid population growth has put extreme pressure on the natural environment in Africa. Globally, over one billion people experience the hardship of hunger, a figure which continues to rise even amidst the riches of the 21st century.

This programme on sack farming provides a glimmer of hope for managing household food security. It features Mike Buseti, a Kenyan farmer, who discovers sack farming. Sack farming averts the starvation that previously threatened his family.

Sack farming involves planting vegetable seedlings on the sides of earth-filled synthetic sacks that are placed on rooftops or doorsteps. Sack farming can be practised anywhere in the world, as it does not require farmland and rainwater.

This script is based on an actual interview. You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on a similar topic in your area. Or you might choose to produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors, not the original people involved in the interviews.

*Fade up signature tune then under*

**Announcer:** A very warm welcome to those of you tuned in to our station. We are glad you’re

listening to our program. I am your presenter, Rosemary Nyaole.

*Fade up signature tune, then out*

**Announcer:** If you are hungry because you don’t have enough land and water to grow food, today we have some good news for you. We're going to talk about how you and your family can enjoy an unlimited vegetable harvest from the comfort of your doorstep. In today’s program we will hear about sack farming, and will learn how to harvest vegetables without farmland or rainwater. Sack farming involves planting vegetable seedlings on the sides of earth-filled synthetic sacks that are placed on rooftops or doorsteps. We will feature one Kenyan farmer who has done exactly that. Stay tuned.

*Musical bridge*

**Announcer:** Welcome back to our talk on sack farming. We are going to take a memorable journey together – a journey to Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, commonly known as the city in the sun. There we will meet Mike Buseti, an urban farmer. You might be wondering why Mike chose to farm in the city. Let’s find out together. But first, listen to this drama!

*Fade up heavy snoring, clock ticking, baby crying*

**Jane:** (*Agitated*) Mike, wake up! Mike, my husband, I just can’t continue like this!

**Mike:** (*Stops snoring*) … What? What is it, my dear wife?

**Jane:** The baby. Our baby, Mike. Do we just sit back and watch our baby starve to death? Tell me, Mike.

*Baby cries louder*

**Mike:** What? … What is it now? *(Jumps off bed)* Can’t I just have some sleep? Why not breastfeed your baby?

**Jane:** (*Sarcastic*) I hear you well, my dear husband. Now he is *my* baby? (*Serious*) It’s now three days, three good days, since I last had a proper meal. You know very well what that means to a mother. This baby has been suckling the whole night. But there is no milk …

**Mike:** But … (*stammering*) but we’ve lost everything. No food, no money. The land is gone – oh my land.

**Jane:** I am tired and weak.How are we going to survive (*sobbing*)? We might as well starve to death (*more sobs*). Mike, my husband, if you truly care, go fetch food for us. (*Sarcastic*) Or better still, sit there and watch us die of starvation.

**Mike:** *(Forceful)*No I can’t! (*Angrily)* I just cannot stand all these problems.

*Rapid footsteps, door opening then closing*

*Bridge music*

**Mike:** *(Speaking to himself)*My family had enough food before violence erupted in my up country home. We had to move to the city, and now we are faced with starvation. There is no farmland, there is no rainwater. Oh God, where do I go from here? God, you know how much I love my family. But look at me now. I have no hope. I can’t watch them go hungry.

**Voice:** (*Reverb*) Go back to your wife and son. Go, go, go …

**Mike:** Whose voice is that? Hey you, do you know what you’re asking me to do? To go back to my house and watch my son and wife die of starvation. No! I can’t! (*Stammering*) I just cannot stand that.

**Narrator:**A street urchin spots Mike. Jose is carrying a dirty sack on his back that is filled halfway with all sorts of garbage*.* He thinks of mugging Mike.

**Jose:** *(Off mic – speaking to himself)*That man over there. Could he be my good catch first thing this morning. (*On mic*) But why is he sitting all alone? Let me go and find out what he is up to.

*Gradually fade up rapid footsteps and eerie music, then under*

**Jose:** (*Whistling)*Hey you! What the hell are you doing here?

**Mike:** *(Mimicking Jose)* And you? What the hell are *you* doing here?

**Jose:** How dare you talk to me like that?

**Mike:** So, what are you up to?

**Jose:** This is my territory. Give me all that you have.

**Mike:** (*Sarcastic*) I give you all that I have? Yes, here I am. Take me … kill me if you want. I have nothing to lose.

*Fade up rapid bits of eerie music then slow down*

**Jose:** (*Talking to himself*) I can’t believe …

**Mike:** Young man, relax. We can work together, can’t we?

**Jose:** *(Surprised*) What exactly do you mean?

**Mike:** My name is Mike. I am here in the city because I lost my land and everything else. Tell me your name.

**Jose:** Call me Jose. I also lost all my parents and relatives. All I have is this sack, and two others. I use them for collecting garbage. That’s how I earn a living now.

*Bridge music up 10” then under*

**Narrator:** At first, Jose thought Mike was crazy and stayed away from him. But, after meeting him for several nights and talking a little more to him, he learned to trust Mike. Little by little, they began to work together.

*Fade up music for 10” then fade out*

**Announcer:** That short drama explains the challenges facing Mike and many other farmers who migrate to urban centres. Mike had to act very fast to save Jane and their baby from starvation. He discovered a practice called sack farming that saved their lives. This involves growing vegetables in sacks filled with soil and kitchen waste. All you need is a sack, soil, and seedlings. Jose’s three sacks became their first sack farms. I had a tour of Mike’s sack farms and had this conversation with him.

*Fade up street sounds* (*people talking, hawkers, children playing, traffic, etc*.)*,* *then under voices*

**Nyaole:** How did you become a sack farmer?

**Mike:** After struggling to find vegetables in Nairobi, I asked myself: How can I increase food security for the family? How can I have enough for us and some excess to sell? I met Jose, a street urchin. He is an orphan, so I took him in and became like a father to him. He had three sacks he used for collecting garbage. I pondered over the idea of filling the sacks with soil and using them as our kitchen farm. We tried it and it worked. Then I introduced sack farming to some of my friends. It is now easier for us to grow enough food for our families because we don’t need a big space to farm.

*Musical bridge*

**Announcer:** We're back talking about sack farming. Sack farming involves planting vegetable

seedlings on the sides of earth-filled sacks that are placed on rooftops or doorsteps. We've already discovered how Mike, a Kenyan urban farmer, started sack farming. You might be wondering what it takes to make sack farming a reality. Let’s demonstrate this together with Mike.

**Mike:** First you get a sack, soil, and some composted manure. Mix one part manure with three parts soil. Then fill the sack up to about six inches.

**Nyaole:** You mean I add six inches of a mixture of soil and composted manure to the sack?

**Mike:** Yes. Then take a 15 by 20 centimetre plastic container which is open at both ends. Put it inside the sack. Then put stones inside the plastic container. Add soil inside and around the plastic container and keep adding soil until you fill the sack. Now your farm is ready. Just water the sack farm and then plant your seedlings or seed. Remember to set up your sack farm in a sunny place.

**Nyaole:** Okay, so all I need to be a sack farmer is a sack, soil, composted manure and water. I mix one part composted manure with three parts soil in a sack. Then I plant seedlings on top and all round the sack. Then water first thing in the morning and in the evening. Is that right?

**Mike:** Yes. That is it.

**Nyaole:** How exactly do I plant the seedlings?

**Mike:** We recommend you plant about six seedlings of sukuma wiki (*Editor’s note: kale in Kiswahili*) at the top of the sack. Plant the other seedlings, roughly twenty four, in a zigzag line all around the sack. Place each seedling about six inches apart.

**Nyaole:** Now that we’ve discovered a simple way to provide vegetables for our families, why not give it a try? We will take a short break. When we get back, Mike will tell us how to avoid water logging in our sack farm.

*Musical bridge*

**Announcer:** Before we took a break,Mike talked about plastic containers and stones. Why is it necessary to use a plastic container and stones in a sack farm?

**Mike:** The plastic container and the stones in sack farming help to filter water. Without them, the soil and plants would be water logged and would die. The stones inside the container prevent water blockage.

**Nyaole:** Why do you use a plastic container?

**Mike:** Used plastic containers are readily available in our kitchens and dumpsites. The other option is to use wire mesh inside the sack. But I had no money to buy any. The plastic container must be open at both ends so that water can easily penetrate to the bottom of the sack. Use only one container for one sack.

**Nyaole:** How often do you replace the sacks?

**Mike:** The green sack that I’ve just shown you will last for two to three years. It depends on the weather conditions. But replace the sack as soon as it is too worn out to hold soil.

**Nyaole:** How frequently do you add fertilizer to your sack farm?

**Mike:** I add manure on top of the sack roughly every three months. Being an organic farmer, I buy manure from poultry farmers and use it to improve the soil fertility.

**Nyaole:** How many seedlings should I plant in a single sack?

**Mike:** Each sack contains about thirty seedlings. Plant six seedlings on top of the sack. Plant the rest, around twenty four seedlings, all around the sack. As I mentioned earlier, plant them in zigzag, not a straight line, about six inches apart.

**Nyaole:** So I plant thirty seedlings? Six on top and twenty four all around one sack?

**Mike:** Exactly that! Three sacks contain roughly ninety seedlings. That would provide enough vegetables for an average household to feed regularly and even sell some to a few neighbours.

**Nyaole:** Enough to feed an average family for how long?

**Mike:** For as long as you keep planting fresh seedlings. It takes about three weeks for sukuma wiki to be ready for harvest. So, you should plant fresh seedlings every three weeks.

**Nyaole:** Water is very scarce here. How do you water your vegetables?

**Mike:** I buy water for my usual household use. After use, I purify the used water by passing it through tiny charcoal particles. These are left over from the charcoal we use for cooking. Twenty litres of water is enough to water three sack farms twice a day. This is quite economical.

**Nyaole:** Can I water my sack farm any time of the day?

**Mike:** No. It is better to do the watering very early in the morning and late in the evening. This minimizes the amount of water that evaporates. Never use soapy water unless you have passed it through this process of charcoal purification.

*Musical bridge*

**Announcer:** Today we've been talking about how to harvest vegetables without farmland or rainwater. As usual, there can never be plants without pests. How do we control pests in a sack farm? Mike has managed to keep his vegetables free from pests without using insecticides. Let’s find out how he has managed to overcome this challenge.

**Mike:** To control pests, use pepper powder. Mix it with pawpaw leaves. Actually, pepper by itself will work.

**Nyaole:** How do you prepare the powder?

**Mike:** You crush the pawpaw leaves and add powdered pepper to them. Then you mix with water and spray your vegetables. You can also use milk, but we don’t encourage using milk as it’s expensive. I should mention that controlling weeds in sack farming is, of course, much easier.

**Nyaole:** What are some of the other challenges you face?

**Mike:** There have been quite a lot. First, it was money and space. I managed to find a rental house. My sack farms are in every available space around my rental house. That became my land here in Nairobi. Also, there are people who harvest my vegetables when I am away. But the benefits outweigh the challenges. My wife Jane and our son are now healthy and strong. This is my greatest joy.

*Music up then under*

**Announcer:** We’ve just discovered how to develop a sack farm. Now, members of Mike Buseti’s household peacefully enjoy a meal of sukuma-wiki regularly with little effort. His family no longer fears starvation. We can do the same.

*Music up then under*

**Announcer:** I hope you've enjoyed this program about sack farming. If you have already tried this method and have some suggestions or ideas for other listeners, please contact us here at the radio station and tell us about your experiences. That's all for today. Thank you for listening. This is your presenter, Rosemary Nyaole.

## *Fade up music then out*

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: [Rosemary Nyaole-Kowuor](http://www.farmradiotraining.org/user/view.php?id=184&course=31), Shine 103.1FM, (Daystar University, Kenya).

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