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# Pack 99, Item 5

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**Mother of twins: New maize variety enriches and nourishes Ugandan farmers**

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### Notes to broadcaster

This script captures the experiences of farmers who are growing and selling quality protein maize, also called QPM, in the midwestern district of Kibaale, in Uganda. The variety of maize they are growing is called *Nalongo* in Kibaale, which means “Mother of twins.”

The script shows how farmers can grow this variety of maize to improve their income and food security. QPM matures more quickly (in a little more than three months) than other varieties, and when harvested, it’s heavier, making it successful as a commercial food crop. Also, it has much more protein than traditional varieties, and can help address malnutrition in children and adults, especially protein-deprived sick and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers.

You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on improved varieties of maize or other crops in your area, and how farmers are improving their family’s nutrition or earning a greater income from these varieties.

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.

If you choose to use this script as background material or as inspiration for creating your own program, you might consider the following questions:

* If maize is a major crop in your area, are there varieties which are better suited for the current climate? Are there varieties with better nutrition? Have farmers been planting these new varieties? If so, what were their results? Are there any barriers which stop farmers from planting the new varieties?
* Have government extension services been promoting any new varieties of staple crops? Why are they promoting them and what have been the results for farmers? (Talk to both men and women farmers)
* What problems are local farmers having with local staple crops? Are these problems being addressed by extension workers or perhaps by NGOs and other organizations?

Apart from speaking directly to farmers and other key players in the local agriculture sector, you could also use these questions as the basis for a phone-in or text-in segment in your regular farmer program. You could also invite farmers and others to the studio for a discussion panel. The panel could also take place on location in a village or on a farm.

Estimated running time for this script, with intro and outro, is about 20 minutes.

**HOST:** Greetings, listeners, and welcome to the program. My name is \_\_\_\_. Today we will be talking about maize. To be more specific, we are talking about a variety of maize that many Ugandans have nicknamed *Nalongo*. “Nalongo” literally means “the mother of twins.” The variety is also called Quality Protein Maize, or *Longe* 5.

This variety yields about one tonne per hectare and is extra nutritious! Stay tuned to hear about a variety of maize that families say is making them ready to kick poverty out of their life forever!

(PAUSE)

We Ugandans love maize, and that’s why we consume it more than all the other crops we grow. For breakfast, lunch and supper, our children consume it every day in primary and secondary school. When they reach university, they find it there too. If they graduate and join the police or the military, our sons and daughters enjoy delicious maize every day. Those who don’t join the armed forces find it at their workplaces; many Ugandans believe that a plate of food without *posho* is incomplete and “shy.” The machine called Uganda doesn't run on petrol. It runs on maize.

But climate change happened and maize has been producing less and less because of too much heat and not enough rain. A need arose for a variety of maize that was climate-smart, one that was moderately drought-tolerant, a variety that could perform relatively well under low rainfall compared to other varieties.

The National Agricultural Research Center went to work. Not only did they aim for a variety of maize that would do well in droughts, they also wanted it to be a lot more nutritious than traditional varieties. In that way, the many people who eat maize on a daily basis, especially children in the resource-poor communities, would get more protein and other nutritious health benefits.

And that is how Quality Protein Maize or QPM was born. It has a lot of protein unlike other varieties, and eating QPM has been proven to lead to better health. That’s why mothers of little children have shown great interest in growing QPM.

I visited a few farmers in Buyaga County, Kibaale district. First we will hear from Mrs. Bandahura Topista and her husband from Maberenga village, in Bwikara sub-county. This couple can’t believe their luck that they landed on this variety.

Signature tune up and out

**SFX:** BODABODA APPROACHES AND STOPS

**YUSUFU:** Oh, you are the one from the radio station.

**HOST:** Yes I am, sir.

**YUSUFU:** You are very welcome. Please take a seat. (CALLING) My dear wife, the man who has come to interview you is here. How was the journey all the way here to this deep village? (LAUGHS)

**HOST:** The journey was okay, sir. I am happy to be here.

**YUSUFU:** What are you here to interview my wife about again?

**TOPISTA:** (MOVING TOWARDS MIC) He is here to interview me about *Mother of twins* maize. You are welcome, our visitor. Please ask your questions. You have a long journey back, and it’s coming to six o’clock.

**HOST:** Thank you, madam. Well, Topista, I am told you have a beautiful story about growing maize. Is this true?

**TOPISTA:** (LAUGHS) Well, I think so. Last year in August, I planted three kilos of *Mother of twins* maize and I harvested more than a tonne.

**HOST:** Wow! And how did you feel about that?

**TOPISTA:** (LAUGHS) I could not believe it. I keep pinching myself and thanking God for loving me! I could not believe it.

**HOST:** Why was it so hard to believe?

**TOPISTA:** Because I had never seen anything like this. I have been growing maize for years, but I had never harvested so much. But with this *Mother of twins* variety I was dumfounded!

**HOST:** Why do you call it *Mother of twins*?

**TOPISTA:** That’s what we call it here, maybe because it always has at least two cobs on each stalk.

**HOST:** How did you first learn about this variety?

**TOPISTA:** On the radio. They kept talking about it, but I didn't take any notice. Maize was really never my interest.

**HOST:** Why is that?

**TOPISTA:** Because it doesn't do well in our soil; we don’t know why. So I thought that this variety would also disappoint.

**HOST:** How did you end up planting it?

**TOPISTA:** I visited a friend of mine who had a healthy maize crop. When I asked her what she had done to have such a good crop, she told me it was a variety called *Mother of twins* that yields very well. So she gave me three kilos as seed.

**HOST:** And you planted the three kilos just to see?

**TOPISTA:** Yes, and I was shocked by the harvest. I harvested over a tonne of maize! I mean, the cobs are so big that one can fill a 500 millilitre mug with grain!

**YUSUFU:** It’s true … and the interesting thing is that the grains are heavier than other varieties.

**HOST:** What do you mean?

**YUSUFU:** Normally, a bag of other varieties weighs about 100 kilos. But with *Mother of twins*, a bag of the same size can weigh over 125 kilos!

**HOST:** Wow! You must have made a lot of money!

**YUSUFU:** We were able to send our son to one of the best schools in the country. I just returned from taking him to Kampala last week. If someone has a good amount of land and plants *Mother of twins*, they will kick poverty from their lives forever!

**HOST:** So let me get this straight: You have only planted this variety of maize once?

**YUSUFU:** No. I first planted it in February last year, but the drought was so prolonged that I didn't harvest anything. But I didn't give up. I planted it again in August last year and that’s when God blessed me. (LAUGHS)

**HOST:** How do you plant this maize?

**TOPISTA:** In lines, with three feet between each line. And the seeds too are also three feet from each other in the lines.

**HOST:** And you plant other things in the spaces, I suppose …

**TOPISTA:** No. The maize grows better when we plant it all alone. And it’s easier to weed when there is no other crop in the middle.

**HOST:** I see.

**TOPISTA:** And you know one other thing about this maize? It’s sweet. It’s delicious. It has a good flavour. When I make porridge, the children love it because it almost tastes like I have added sugar! With other varieties, you have to add sugar for children to enjoy it.

**HOST:** (LAUGHS) Does that mean you are ditching all the other varieties?

**TOPISTA:** I am beginning to think that they are a waste of my time! (LAUGHS)

**YUSUFU:** My wife is right. This variety is truly worth a farmer’s energy. That’s why we have decided to prepare a lot more land so we can plant more of this variety the moment the rains start. We want to plant at least an acre. How I wish I had access to a tractor …

**HOST:** I left Maberenga and took a hired motorcycle to another village, some 40 kilometres away, where a group of women have just started growing this variety of maize.

Here, I met Bakeine Mary, a woman in her late 50s. She is the secretary of the 21-member farmers’ group in Nyabugando village.

**SFX:**  BODABODA STOPS AWAY FROM MIC

**HOST:** (MOVING TOWARDS MIC) Hello, madam. Are you Mary

Bakeine?

**MARY:** (CLOSE TO MIC) Yes. Are you the one who called me about

growing maize?

**HOST:** Yes, madam. I am happy to find you here.

**MARY:** Thank you, but I am in a meeting, so I hope it takes only a few

minutes.

**HOST:** I will go straight to the first question. Mary, you said on the phone that you are part of a farmers’ group. What do you grow as a group?

**MARY:** We plant cassava, beans and groundnuts. Well, that was until last year when we planted *Mother of twins* maize. So now we have added maize to the crops we grow.

**HOST:** Are you saying the group never grew maize before?

**MARY:** No, never. We only planted crops that rewarded us well after harvest. Maize usually doesn't do well in our soils. Don’t get me wrong; we grow maize to feed our children. But we rarely grow it for sale. In fact, there is never enough to sell.

**HOST:** So why did your group decide to grow this variety of maize?

**MARY:** We kept hearing on the radio that this variety would grow very well in our soils, that it could withstand the sun and give us good produce – and that they were giving it out free at the sub-county. So we decided to give it a try.

**HOST:** And what happened?

**MARY:** All I can say is, we have decided that this coming season, we are using all our land to plant *Nalongo*.

**HOST:** Why is that?

**MARY:** We were so pleased with the harvest. We got 20 kilos of seed from the sub-county and planted. After a few weeks, birds came and ate all the shoots, so we had to plant more seeds to replace the shoots that were destroyed. Of course by this time, it was too late for re-planting. But even with these challenges, we managed to harvest 925 kilos in a hectare!

**HOST:** So this variety withstands harsh conditions?

**MARY:** Yes. And that’s not all. This maize is sweet. When you roast a fresh cob, it’s delicious. When you make porridge out of it, it’s smooth and sugary. Our children and grandchildren love it … just like they said on the radio.

**HOST:** That was Bakeine Mary talking about how her farmers’ group never grew maize until they tried QPM.

**SFX:**  BODABODA STOPS AWAY FROM MIC

Back at the local radio station, Kagadi-Kibaale Community Radio, I talked to Mr. Kasooha Ismael, the man in charge of agricultural programming at the station.

**HOST:** Mr. Kasooha, I am told your radio programs convinced farmers in this region to take up Quality Protein Maize.

**ISMAEL:** We are hoping that more and more farmers take up this variety.

**HOST:** Why?

**ISMAEL:** Because something has to be done. The traditional varieties of maize have really failed to do well in this region. The climatic changes have for years made it hard for farmers to harvest much maize. A new variety that was resistant to harsh conditions had to be introduced.

**HOST:** And when did you introduce this variety?

**ISMAEL:** We started talking about QPM on June 1, 2013.

**HOST:** So only one season has gone by since you started talking about it?

**ISMAEL:** Yes, only one season.

**HOST:** And how was the uptake? Did many people plant it?

**ISMAEL:** The uptake was good. By the start of the August season, we had thoroughly talked about the good qualities of this variety on the radio.

**HOST:** What good qualities?

**ISMAEL:** (MORE EMPHATIC) This variety is resistant to drought, it’s more productive, it matures earlier than other varieties, it’s rich in protein unlike traditional varieties, and it’s heavier than other varieties.

**HOST:** What were the reactions of the farmers after the harvest?

**ISMAEL:** Very happy. Many said they got a bigger harvest than they had ever seen in their lives. All of the farmers that grew the variety confirmed that it’s heavier than other varieties.

It looks like word of mouth is having an effect – many new farmers are asking about seeds. It looks like many more will be taking up QPM this season. By the way, the agro-input dealers sold out all the maize seed they had stocked and even stocked more and more. The sales were extraordinary.

**HOST:** That was Mr. Kasooha Ismael, the man in charge of agricultural programming on Kagadi-Kibaale Community Radio.

SIGNATURE TUNE UP AND UNDER HOST, THEN UP FOR 10 SECONDS AND FADE OUT.

On the farmers’ side, we talked to Topista and her husband, Yusufu, who wish they had a tractor so that they could plant *Mother of twins* on more acres of land and say goodbye to poverty forever.

We also talked to Mary Bakeine, who belongs to a farmers’ group that decided, after being introduced to QPM, to start growing maize for the first time.

Dear listeners, my name is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, saying goodbye for now. Catch me again next week, same time, same station, for the agricultural program. Goodbye.

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: Tony Mushoborozi, Scrypta Pro Uganda Ltd.

Reviewed by: Kasooha Ismael, news editor, Kagadi-Kibaale Community Radio, Uganda; and Mr. Bahindura John, African Rural University, Kagadi-Kibaale, Uganda.

**Information sources**

Interviews with:

Mr. and Mrs. Topista Bandahura, February 27, 2014

Mrs. Mary Bakeine, February 28, 2014

Mr. Kasooha Ismael, February 29, 2014

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