

# Pack 104, Item 5

Type: Drama

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# Be a hare, not a hyena: Growing standards for hard-working potato farmers

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**Notes to broadcaster**

To ensure that food is safe, to help farmers and processors, and to improve value chains, governments help create and enforce standards for growing and processing foods such as potatoes. Standards are detailed guidelines for producing safe, high quality produce. They cover all aspects of production, processing, labelling and transportation. The National Bureau of Standards in each country collaborates with other stakeholders to create and enforce these standards.

When producers and processors follow standards, product quality improves, producers and processors can expect increased income, and consumers are assured of safe, high quality products. In addition, trade and marketing across national borders is possible, as is the case with the East and Central African harmonized standards for fresh potatoes.

This script is a six-scene drama which shows how small-scale potato growers can grow fresh potatoes to the standards of the market. The script talks about standards for seeds, cultural practices, harvesting, storage, and transport.

You could use this drama as inspiration to produce a similar program on standards for potatoes or other crops in your area. Or you might choose to present this drama as part of your regular farmer program, using voice actors to represent the speakers.

Choose a unique signature tune for the beginning and end of each episode so your audience will instantly recognize that an episode of the drama is about to begin. Create a promo for the drama and broadcast the promo frequently – during your regular farmer program and at other times when farmers are likely to be listening.

Follow episodes of the drama by interviewing a potato farmer or an expert on the potato value chain. Invite listeners to call or text in with questions and comments. Topics for discussion might include:  
• What are the recommended standards for growing fresh potatoes for the market?   
• What are the biggest challenges to meeting those standards, and how can those challenges be successfully addressed?

Estimated running time for this item is 15-20 minutes, including intro and outro.

**CHARACTERS**

**EXTENSION OFFICER:** Woman in mid-thirties, knowledgeable and trained in agriculture. Known and loved in village.

**MURIMI:** His name means “the farmer” in the Gikuyu language. In his mid-forties, has been farming for a long time. Happy and charismatic, a good farmer but does not pay attention to every detail. Carefree and likes spending time with friends enjoying a drink.

**GITONGA:** His name means “the rich one.” A serious young man in his mid-thirties, new to farming but extremely detail-oriented and determined to succeed.

**MACHARIA:** His name means **“**the one who looks for.” An astute businessman in his early thirties, talks fast. Grew up in Wamugunda village but lives and does most of his business in the city. Very keen on good produce.

**SETTING:** Wamugunda village in central Kenya. Wamugunda means “of the farmland.”

**SIG TUNE UP THEN UNDER**

**NARRATOR:** Potatoes are an important food crop in East and Central Africa, and are a great source of energy. Potatoes mature within three months and produce good yields, but cannot be stored for more than a few weeks. They can also be processed into starch and potato chips. All this means that potatoes are a good source of income for farmers! But many farmers get a poor crop and little money. Why? Because they do not follow the established standards for growing, harvesting and storing potatoes to ensure quality.

In today’s drama, we meet two farmers who grew potatoes at the same time. One got a very good crop and sold his potatoes at a very high price. The other did not pay attention to detail when planting, harvesting and storing his potatoes. And so he had a poor harvest and lost money. In fact, nobody wanted to buy his potatoes! In today’s program, you will learn how to grow, store and transport potatoes according to the harmonized standards for roots and tubers in East and Central Africa. Growing to these standards will ensure you get a better market and a higher income. Stay tuned.

**SIG TUNE UP THEN OUT**

**SCENE 1**

**NARRATOR:** Welcome to Wamugunda village, the home of farmers Gitonga and Murimi. Today, the farmers of Wamugunda village are meeting with an agricultural extension officer, who is teaching them how to grow good quality potatoes. Let’s listen.

**SFX:** SOUND OF MANY FARMERS TALKING

**Extension Officer:** Okay, let us recap what we have learnt today about potatoes. (PAUSE AS VOICES STOP) Potatoes provide food for people in the community and earn us a really good income if we grow them according to the required East Africa standards. So … can someone please remind me what we said about caring for potatoes?

**GITONGA:** Grow potatoes from good quality seeds, harvest at the right time, not too early or too late, and be careful not to cut or bruise the tubers when harvesting. Oh, one more thing! Put the potatoes in safe and clean containers to avoid contamination. Store in a cold dry place and in proper packing material to avoid the potato going bad quickly.

**EXTENSION OFFICER:** Very good, Gitonga.And don’t forget to pack and label the potatoes well, showing the weight and the source of the product.

**MURIMI:** We also said that we can get a lot of money from growing potatoes. I liked that point!

**SFX:** LAUGHTER

**EXTENSION OFFICER:** (LAUGHING) Yes, Murimi, but they have to be *good quality* potatoes. *Good quali*ty potatoes will get you more money! Not just any potatoes. And remember that potatoes can be processed into chips and exported or used in industries. But this can only happen if farmers follow the standards for growing quality potatoes.

Okay, that brings us to the end of our meeting. All the best in growing your potatoes!

**SFX:** CLAPPING THEN FADE

**SCENE 2**

AT GITONGA’S FARM

**SFX:**FARM SOUNDS (CHICKENS, COWS, SOUND OF DIGGING)

**MURIMI:** (COMING ON-MIC)Hi, Gitonga my neighbour, how are you? I came to see how you are doing.

**GITONGA:** (BREATHING HARD BETWEEN THE SOUND OF DIGGING) I am fine, Murimi. How are you?

**MURIMI:** I am very fine, my neighbour, very relaxed. I see you are busy. What are you planting this season?

**GITONGA:** I am planting maize, beans, and vegetables here – but I also want to grow good quality potatoes over there. Last season my potato harvest was not good. But potatoes can fetch a lot of money – like the extension officer said.

**MURIMI:** (YAWNING) I am just glad I’ve finished planting my potatoes. Now I can rest and wait for the harvest!

**GITONGA:** (SURPRISED) The rains have not even come and you are already thinking of harvest? I am digging my farm for the second time. Then I will build ridges and apply manure and fertilizer and plant the potatoes before the rains begin in two weeks. That is how Madam Extension Officer taught us, right?

**MURIMI:** (SCORNFULLY) Extension officer this, extension officer that ... You don’t have to follow everything she said! You are not a schoolchild any more, Gitonga. (PAUSE) Don’t worry; I will apply fertilizer later. Right now, let me relax. I’m sure we will both get a good harvest.

**GITONGA:** I hope so. But be careful. The last time, neither of us got a very good harvest because we took shortcuts and planted bad seeds. This time, I am determined to get good potatoes.

**MURIMI:** (CALMLY, UNWORRIED, YAWNING) Don’t worry, Gitonga … I have been doing this for a loooong time. Trust me – the potatoes will be ok.

**GITONGA:** You want to bet on that?

**MURIMI:** (IMMEDIATELY WAKEFUL) Sure! How about 1,000 shillings for whoever gets the most for their crop?

**GITONGA:** Ok.

**MURIMI:** (CHUCKLING) And since I know I will win the bet, why don’t we throw in two weeks of labour in the next planting season?

**GITONGA:** Sounds a bit harsh, but ok.

**MURIMI:** Let me go back home. I am expecting some visitors. See you later.

**GITONGA:** Alright.

**SFX:** FADE OUT FARM SOUNDS

**SCENE 3**

**SFX:** FADE UP FARM SOUNDS, THEN FADE DOWN AND HOLD UNDER

**MURIMI:** (COMING ON-MIC) Hi, Gitonga. I thought I would pass by so we could go to the shopping centre for a drink. (PAUSE) But I see you have started harvesting.

**GITONGA:** (BREATHING HARD) Thank you, but not today. Aren’t you harvesting?

**MURIMI:** Not yet, maybe next week.

**GITONGA:** Won’t it be a little late for harvest? (EXCITED) Look at this harvest! I am really happy! This time I followed what the extension officer said to the letter. No shortcuts. I prepared my land in good time, got good potato varieties, and applied manure and fertilizer when planting. I weeded twice and cut the bushes around my garden to scare away pests like rats and moles – you know how much of a problem they …

**MURIMI:** (INTERRUPTING IMPATIENTLY) Ok ok ok! So much work! I didn’t do all those things … but I know I will still get a good harvest! I just planted last year’s seed and ploughed once and used fertilizer. That is enough! (PAUSE) Like I said, I have been doing this for a long time and I am sure I will win the bet.

**GITONGA:** (EXCITED, TALKING FAST) I am going to sell my potatoes to Macharia from the city. He will be here early next week. So I need to harvest, sort them in sizes, and separate the good ones from the bad ones. I’ve built a new store that is cool and dry. I’ll put them there before he comes. The rest – I will make chips to sell to the local supermarkets.

**MURIMI:** (SCORNFUL) Why all the ambition, Gitonga? You want to sell to Macharia? He won’t give you a good price. I will sell him a few bags, but the rest I will take to the local market.

**GITONGA:** (SURPRISED) But will you get a good price? You know what happens when all the potatoes go to the local market at the same time – the price becomes very low!

**MURIMI:** Don’t worry; if the price is too low, I will take some to the city. It’s easy to find a market in the city. Everyone eats potatoes.

**GITONGA:** (UNSURE) I don’t think it’s that easy. Why don’t you just sort and store them well and then sell to Macharia? He takes them to the city anyway and gives a good price if the potatoes are good quality. You remember what we learnt about storage and transportation? You need to put them in cushioning material for the journey. Otherwise, they’ll be bruised by the long trip.

**MURIMI:** (DISMISSING HIS CONCERNS) That’s not a big deal, Gitonga. The road to the city is good now; they will arrive in good shape. (SHOUTING AS HE LEAVES) Don’t worry so much, Gitonga! I am off to the shopping centre to drink. (LAUGHING) Sorry you’ll be here in the hot sun. (FADE OUT FARM SOUNDS AND SOUND OF MURIMI LAUGHING)

**SCENE 4**

**SFX:** FARM SOUNDS. CAR DOORS OPENING AND CLOSING.

**MACHARIA:** (WHISTLING) Gitonga! Gitonga, I am here for the potatoes. Where are you?

**GITONGA:** (COMING ON-MIC) Welcome, Macharia. Let’s go to the storage area so you can choose what you want.

**SFX:**FOOTSTEPS

**MACHARIA:** I see you are also growing maize and beans.

**GITONGA:** Oh yes,and vegetables too in that small patch over there.

**MACHARIA:** They are doing well too.Maybe I will buy those from you when they are ready.

**GITONGA:** Of course. Here we are. I have sorted them … the big potatoes are here and the small ones are there.

**MACHARIA:** Wow, your potatoes look healthy, Gitonga! (PAUSE) They are whole, clean, firm, dry, no green on the skins … and I can’t see any signs of disease or pests. And no sprouting or deformation. (STANDS UP) These are really good. I am definitely taking them. How much for a bag?

**GITONGA:** Three thousand shillings a bag. I know they are going for 3,500 to 4,000 shillings a bag in the city where you sell them.

**MACHARIA:** That’s expensive, Gitonga, my brother. Look, I will buy them for 1,600 shillings a bag; it’s a very good price.

**GITONGA:** (DETERMINED) No, I cannot sell them at that price. Like you said, they are very good. I may not have a huge harvest, but I have taken my time to produce good quality potatoes. So I would like a better offer.

**MACHARIA:** Two thousand shillings?

**GITONGA:** Two thousand five hundred is my final offer.

**MACHARIA:** Well, I must look around. I am sure your neighbour Murimi has a better offer.

**GITONGA:** (CONFIDENT) Maybe, but my potatoes are better quality, I can assure you.

**SFX:** FADE OUT FARM SOUNDS

**SCENE 5**

**SFX:** FARM SOUNDS. CAR DOOR OPENING, CLOSING.

**MACHARIA:** (WHISTLING) Murimi! Murimi, I am here for the potatoes. Are you here?

**MURIMI:** (COMING ON-MIC, NERVOUS) I am here, Macharia. I have been waiting for you. I need you to buy my potatoes, please.

**MACHARIA:** Okay, let me see them first. You seem to be in a hurry to sell them.

**MURIMI:** (STAMMERING AS THEY WALK TO HIS STORAGE AREA) Aaah, yes … Doesn’t everyone want to sell potatoes in Wamugunda? Ok, here we are. How much you will give me? I have plenty of potat ...

**MACHARIA:** (INTERRUPTING) … My goodness! Your potatoes are in bad shape, Murimi! Look! These are turning green; they stayed in the ground for too long. And look at these. They are rotting. The smell is awful!

**MURIMI:** (DESPERATE) They weren’t like this when I looked at them last week. Aaah … there are plenty of good ones in here if you just look carefully … see, like this one …

**MACHARIA:** (INTERRUPTING) No, no, Murimi … I think you didn’t pay attention to detail when you grew and stored your potatoes.

**MURIMI:** (INCREASINGLY DESPERATE) I will give you a cheap price for the good ones. One thousand five hundred shillings a bag?

**MACHARIA:** (INCREDULOUS) Who would buy these potatoes, Murimi? Anyway, because you mixed the good ones with the bad ones, they will all be rotten before I get to the city. And they are all sizes, big and small. And look – is this a pesticide container? Are you serious? This can poison people. The storage area should be safe.

**MURIMI:** Okay, how about a thousand shillings per …

**MACHARIA:** No thank you, Mr. Murimi. Gitonga has offered me two thousand five hundred shillings per bag and his potatoes are exceptionally good. I will take his offer. Sorry, Murimi, maybe next season if your potatoes are good ...

**SFX:** FADE OUT FARM SOUNDS

**SCENE 6**

**SFX:** FARM SOUNDS. CAR DOORS OPENING, CLOSING.

**MACHARIA:** (SHOUTING URGENTLY) Gitonga! Gitonga, I am back.

**GITONGA:** (TEASING) Hmmm, Macharia, what brings you back?

**MACHARIA:** (EAGER) I will take all your potatoes. I have been all around the village – even to Murimi. Your potatoes are the best. I will take 60 bags.

**GITONGA:** Yes, sir! But only at 3,000 shillings a bag.

**MACHARIA:** (PLEADING)You said 2,500 shillings a bag, Gitonga. My brother, you hike the price of your potatoes every 30 minutes?

**GITONGA:** (CONFIDENT) 3,000, Macharia, take it or leave it.

**MACHARIA:** (HESITANT THEN DECIDING QUICKLY) Ummmm … OK, I will buy them all. Okay, here are the proper packing bags. We will put labels on them. Put the weight of the bag and your address on the bag. I must go to the village for an hour, and then I will be back for your potatoes. It is good doing business with you, Gitonga. I’ll see you in an hour.

**GITONGA:** Thank you, Macharia.

**SFX:** CAR DOORS OPENING AND CLOSING, CAR DRIVING OFF. CROSS-FADE INTO SOUND OF RUNNING FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING.

**MURIMI:** (COMING ON-MIC, BREATHLESS) Gitonga! Gitonga!

**GITONGA:** Yes, Murimi, what can I do for you?

**MURIMI:** It’s my potatoes.

**GITONGA:** What about them?

**MURIMI:** (WORRIED) Let’s just say I have learnt my lesson. My potatoes are bad – even Macharia refused to buy them! (PAUSES TO CATCH HIS BREATH) Next season I am doing everything like you did – and you will show me how, no short cuts.

**GITONGA:** (LAUGHING) So you are saying that I won?

**MURIMI:** (HESITANT) Well … How much was it?

**GITONGA:** I am sure you have not forgotten … Anyway, it is 1,000 shillings and two weeks of hard labour in my farm during the weeding season. (LAUGHING) I am willing to forget the weeding part though.

**MURIMI:** Here. (SOUND OF MONEY) Your 1,000 shillings. But next time the bet will be 3,000 shillings and I know I will win! (LAUGHTER FROM GITONGA)

**End of drama**

**NARRATOR:** You have been listening toa drama on growing potatoes to the correct standards. Remember that you too can get good quality potatoes like farmer Gitonga if you grow, harvest and store your potatoes the right way.

This program has been produced by the *Enhancing adoption of Harmonized Standards for Roots and Tubers in East and Central Africa* project whose goal is to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through commercialization and increased regional trade of roots and tubers in East and Central Africa.

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For more information on harmonized standards for roots and tubers, please contact the Bureau of Standards in your country.

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