

# Pack 106, Item 4

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**Rice farming: Yaayaa adopts new methods and gets a bountiful harvest**

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**Notes to broadcaster**

Rice has become one of the major staple cereals in Ghana. About 90% of households in Ghana depend on rice for their daily meal, and it is especially popular in urban areas.

In 2011, the average Ghanaian consumed 24 kg of rice per year, and it is expected that consumption will continue to rise. But Ghana depends heavily on imported rice. This is partly due to the fact that about 40 percent of paddy production is lost in the process of converting it into milled rice.

Urban consumers often prefer imported rice over locally-produced rice. Because of poor post-harvest handling, they perceive Ghana’s rice as being of inferior quality.

The government of Ghana and a variety of organizations are making an effort to improve production and post-harvest practices, and convince consumers to switch to quality Ghanaian rice.

This drama tells the story of two competitive maize farmers in a community called Dwirabra. Though Yaayaa and Owusu are both hardworking farmers, they adopt different farming methods. Whilst Owusu decides to stick to his own farming practices, Yaayaa embraces change and learns from experts to improve her farm. Owusu, who prides himself as being the best farmer in the community, is not aware of the progress Yaayaa has made until she is announced as the best farmer of the year. Displeased, Owusu confronts Yaayaa and accuses her of using charms on his farm. But he is stopped by his wife, who presents Owusu with the solution to his problem. The story is woven around the topic of land preparation in rice farming.

Estimated running time: 20 minutes, with intro and outro music.

**CHARACTERS**

**YAAYAA:** Single mother and rice farmer, 30 years of age. She is hard-working and this is a threat to the best farmer in the community.

**MR. OWUSU:** Rice farmer in Dwirabra community, 47 years old, the best farmer they have had in years. He is not dynamic because he believes he is the best. He remains the best till surprised by Yaayaa.

**OBAA YAA:** Ambitious 13-year-old girl, daughter of Yaayaa. She wants to become like her hard-working mum.

**MRS. OWUSU:** Brilliant, 25-year-old wife of Mr. Owusu. She has a good sense of humour and saves the day at the end.

**VOICE RECORDING:** Recorded voice of male expert.

**NARRATOR:** In a small town called Dwirabra lived two rice farmers named Yaayaa and Owusu. In spite of their physical differences, the two farmers were alike in many ways. They were both hard-working and well-informed rice farmers in their community.

This sparked a serious competition between the two farmers, whose farmlands faced each other. Year after year, they judged their success by who had the biggest harvest. They always seemed to be about equally successful, until things really turned around for Yaayaa after she learnt some new techniques on how to prepare her land for better yields. So Yaayaa moved a step ahead of Owusu due to her dynamism and her ability to embrace change. Owusu, on the other hand, resisted change and was left behind.

Will Owusu learn from Yaayaa and catch up? Let’s keep up with these two rice farmers …

**SCENE ONE**

**LOCATION: AT THE FARM**

**CAST: MR. OWUSU, YAAYAA**

**SFX: WEEDING**

**MR. OWUSU:** Hey woman, make sure you don’t cross this line. Why are you so nosy?

**YAAYAA:** Ah, Mr. Owusu, what is nosy about watching you work from my farm? Are you now going to stop me from coming to my own farm?

**MR. OWUSU:** No, I won’t, but stop invading my privacy! I can tell you have been spying on me all this while. Don’t think that I will allow you, little cockroach, to take over the title of best rice farmer. I’m still the best and will always be!

**YAAYAA:** It’s obvious that a little cockroach like me cannot be an elephant—but I can climb an elephant.

**MR. OWUSU:** What? Are you insulting me?

**YAAYAA:** No, I am only using the elders’ tongue [*Editor’s note:* “elder’s tongue” *means “*wise saying.”]

I believe that this unhealthy competition can be stopped. Why can’t we learn from each other? After all, our farms are so closely knitted.

I’m concerned with the way you are tilling your land every season. Is it not too much pressure on the soil?

I learnt that not tilling the soil for some time can bring good benefit to us. It will help us maintain good soil structure. And if you don’t weed while practicing no-till, you will have a layer of vegetation that will keep the soil moist and fertile.

**MR. OWUSU:** Woman, mind your own business. What can you teach me that I don’t already know?

**YAAYAA:** I can teach you what I have learnt from others, from the professionals who have been visiting this community. They are teaching us so many helpful things.

Last Wednesday, they taught us how to prepare our farmland before planting our rice, in order to get maximum yields. The experts taught us some new techniques. They inspected our farms and told me that we have rich clay soil which is good for rice farming. They said that sandy and loamy soil, or a mixture of both, can also be good for rice farming.

**MR. OWUSU:** No wonder you are a woman—always jumping around about frivolous things. (sarcastic)I already know the type of soil on my farm, thank you.

**YAAYAA:** There is nothing frivolous about learning how to make my farm better, Owusu. And this has got nothing to do with my womanhood. As a matter of fact, I have been rubbing my shoulders with you for a long time since I started farming here.

**MR. OWUSU:** So what if you have been doing well with your farm? You still can’t beat me—I am the best in this community. These so-called experts are up to no good, with the poisonous techniques they adopt from foreigners. As for me, I will stick to the good old methods of farming. It is what has brought me this far, and you too.

**YAAYAA:** (AMUSED, Giggles)Mr. Owusu, you will never change! Who told you that using a tractor to till your farm is a … (Imitating Owusu)“good old method”?

**MR. OWUSU:** (Seriously) What your grandfather can see sitting you will never see even if you stand on a stool.

**YAAYAA:** Fine; I give up. May the best one win this season!

**SCENE TWO**

**LOCATION: AT THE FARM**

**CAST: YAAYAA, OBAA ADWOA**

**SFX: BIRDS CHIRPING**

**OBAA ADWOA:** Mummy, I have never seen anything like this on anyone’s farm!

**YAAYAA:** Yes, I’m creating bunds because our farm is on low land. The visiting experts said that I can increase my yields by building bunds that help me retain water.

**OBAA ADWOA:** Wow, please teach me, mummy. I want to be a good farmer like you.

**YAAYAA:** (Laughs) Sure, my dear; you will be. Just follow my instructions and ask questions if you don’t understand anything, ok?

**OBAA ADWOA:** Ok. So what are we doing today?

**YAAYAA:** We have already started preparing our land by creating the bunds.

**OBAA ADWOA:** Ok. What is a bund? And why are we building it?

**YAAYAA:** Our bund is a small mound made with soil. The bund serves as a barrier to help keep water in the field. Fields like ours must be well-bunded and leveled to retain water. It is important that rice fields do not lose water; rice seeds need constant water to grow and produce a good yield.

The soil in the bunds should be compacted, and the bund should be about one metre high. Later on, we will build canals to lead water into and out of our bunded farm.

**OBAA ADWOA:** Wow, sounds like a lot of work to me …

**YAAYAA:** Am I hearing the lazy talk, young lady? (A BIT SARCASTIC AND WITH A VEILED THREAT) Don’t you want me to buy you anything?

**OBAA ADWOA:** (QUICKLY)No, I do. But I’m wondering why we can’t just flood the land and leave.

**YAAYAA:** (sighs)Preparing the land is very important because well-prepared land ensures that the rice field is ready for planting. It helps to control weeds, and it also recycles plant nutrients.

Besides, working on low land can be tricky because the soil doesn’t hold much water. So we need to build bunds so water stays in the soil and does not run off. The bunds help us to retain the water from the stream and get a high yield. Using bunds is one secret to rice farming that I knew nothing about for many years.

But I will no longer lag behind others—it’s my time to shine! This season I’m sure you will get your sewing machine!

**SFX:** Jumps and claps

**OBAA ADWOA:** (Giggling) I can’t wait.

**YAAYAA:** Come help me remove all the large leaves and stalks from the soil, since they can decompose and cause water to drain from the field.

**OBAA ADWOA:** Yes, ma. With pleasure!

**SFX:** resumes work. SOUND OF OBAA ADWOA WALKING THROUGH plants and weeds.

**SCENE THREE**

**LOCATION: MR OWUSU’S COMPOUND**

**CAST: MR. OWUSU, MRS. OWUSU**

**SFX: SOUNDS FROM THE GONG**

**MR. OWUSU:** It is a lie! How did this happen? The gong gong beater did not just announce Yaayaa as the best farmer in this community!

Eii—she won with over 40 bags of rice! That is more than any of us have ever harvested. Where was she when I started farming?

**MRS. OWUSU:** Calm down, my husband—the gong beater is drunk. He doesn’t know what he is saying.

**MR. OWUSU:** You and I know that all traditional gong beaters are typical drunks … but they always give accurate announcements because they face the wrath of the chief if something goes wrong.

That young woman has taken my title and I will face her today … She will answer to me!

**SFX:**DOOR OPENS AND SLAMS SHUT. **(**He picks up a cutlass and rushes out)

**MRS. OWUSU:** Mewura! [*Editor’s note: A Twi word for husband*] … Mewura … please drop that cutlass … Mewura, come back…. Mewura!

**SCENE FOUR**

**LOCATION: YAAYAA’S COMPOUND**

**CAST: MR. OWUSU, MRS. OWUSU, YAAYAA**

**SFX:** Banging on door

**MR. OWUSU:** Come out! Yaayaa, what have you done to my farm?

**YAAYAA:** (Door creaks open)Mr. Owusu. What is the matter?

**MR. OWUSU:** You and I share the same farm space. We do practically the same work on our farms. What did you do to my farm? Come and uproot the *juju* *(Editor’s note: Ghanaian term for charm)* you have hidden before I strike you down with this cutlass! (SOUND OF CUTLASS STRIKING THE GROUND)

**SFX:** Women shrieking

**MRS. OWUSU:** (Clapping her hands)Owusu … Owusu … my husband, has it come to this?

**YAAYAA:** I haven’t placed any charm on your farm. Go and verify from our gods if you like.

You and I do not practice the same techniques on our farms anymore. I have upgraded myself by attending workshops. When I told you about it, you blew me off. You have no right to blame me for your negligence.

**SFX:** SOUND OF CUTLASS STRIKING THE GROUND

**MRS. OWUSU:** Stop this, my husband. I have attended every one of those workshops, and I know what she means. I even have a recording of the teaching on my phone—here! I thought it might be useful someday. Let’s go home; you can listen to it on our way home.

**MR. OWUSU:** You are lucky … if not for my wife …

**YAAYAA: (**Chuckles) Ah, you could have just asked for my help … Shame on you, Mr. knows it all … I simply won this time!

**SCENE FIVE**

**LOCATION: MR.OWUSU’S COMPOUND**

**CAST: MR. OWUSU, MRS. OWUSU**

**SFX:** PHONE BEEPS

**MR. OWUSU:** Hurry up and play the thing … So my own wife had the solution to my problems and never told me?

**MRS. OWUSU:** (Laughs) I never knew my husband was interested in the teaching of others until today! (Both laugh)

Ok, let’s listen. (PAUSE)

**VOICE OF EXPERT:** It is important to note that how well you prepare your land highly affects the size of your harvest. Select a good site. Soil types like loamy, sandy, and clayey soils are very good for a rice farm. Your rice farm must be in an open area, a place where it has access to a body of water, either a permanent or a seasonal stream.

**MR. OWUSU:** I know that …

**MRS. OWUSU:** Shhhhh … quiet!

**VOICE:** Clear your land using the appropriate method. You should know when to till your farm, and that reduced tillage will save you money. Reducing tillage only means that you do not till your farm after every harvest.

All you have to do is to leave the weed and crop residues on the farm to decompose after harvest and serve as good manure to enhance your soil’s fertility.

You can till your farm every three to four harvests or less, depending on how much money you have. But, even if you can afford to till your farm after every harvest, you should consider the benefits from not tilling the farm. Reduced tillage can help to maintain fertile soil for maximum yields.

Remove large plant materials from the soil where you will build a bund. If you don’t, they may decompose and provide a passageway for the water to drain out of the bunded field. To construct your bund …

**MRS. OWUSU:** That’s the end—my battery was finished. But he taught us how to construct the bund. Should I teach you?

**MR. OWUSU:** Yes, please.

**MRS. OWUSU:** (Amused AND SURPRISED) Wow!

Ok, first you have to divide your field into plot sizes that you can level. And then you build an outer bund. The sides of the bund should be one metre long, and then the soil can be filled in to raise it to the desired height. Then you can construct smaller in-field bunds about 60 centimetres away from the outer bund. You can use my tape measure at home just to be sure.

**MR. OWUSU:** Good, good, my smart wife.

**MRS. OWUSU:** (Laughs) Then, to level it, you can walk on the bund to make it compact, layer by layer. In other words, you add some soil, then walk on it, then add some more soil, then walk on it, until you get the right height needed to keep the water in the farm.

**MR. OWUSU:** (Claps HANDS) You are the best woman in the whole wide world! I will always attend these progressive meetings from now on. Myself and the entire family tree!

**MRS. OWUSU:** Hahahaha … Next year’s best farmer goes to the newly reformed Mr. Owusu! (Claps amidst laughter)

**SFX:**Thunderous laughter

## Acknowledgements

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Reviewed: Jonathan Anaglo, Senior Lecturer and Head, Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Ghana-Legon

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