

# Pawpaw farming makes a difference to Gituma

When education meets entrepreneurship there is a likelihood of success since the more well-rounded an entrepreneur's is, the more likely to sell and connect. In addition, hard work and determination builds character and lays the foundation for one's success.

In the remote part of Mworoto in Meru County, we meet Mr. Francis Gituma a former trained agriculturalist who has ventured into pawpaw farming. Gituma, worked previously as an un-trained teacher before being employed in a number of farms in the country.

While working in Munoru farm he noticed how his boss was doing well in pawpaw farming and he decided to resign his job in 2012, to embark on pawpaw farming.

He planted pawpaws in his half an acre farm making at least Ksh.6, 000 per week. "This made me to see that this was a money-spinning crop and I decided to expand the acreage to one. I got my seedlings from Kenya Agricultural Research Institute-Meru and I was also trained on how to prepare my own seedlings and nursery," Francis pointed out.

There are two types of Pawpaw varieties in his farm; the SP and Mountain varieties. The paw-paws are planted in holes of 2ft by 2ft and depth of 1ft while spacing is 6fts. The Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertilizer is used for a period of one week before the seedlings are planted and routine water



*Mr. Francis Gituma a trained agriculturalist looking at pawpaw produce in his farm in Mworoto, Meru County*

supply for a period of one month. Afterwards the Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN) fertilizer is used for top dressing. The 17-17 fertilizer is also used during flowering while routine water management continues for a period of 2 ½ to 3 months.

The crop takes a period of nine months before it matures. Usually Mr. Gituma does his planting in August and by May the fruits are mature. The fruits are plucked when they turn yellowish and given some time for the milky substance to dry before they are packed in a crate or a carton. 1 kg of pawpaws goes for a price of Ksh.50 and in case of a drop it goes for Ksh.30. "For me, I am able to sell 300kg of pawpaws in a week and by the end of the month I get Ksh. 60,000." He notes. On the part of market, he was initially selling his produce to Kamwe Greens but for now he sells

to middlemen and consumers in the neighborhood at the same price.

The pests and diseases that are injurious to pawpaws include the red spider mite which brings black spots on the pawpaw. Nonetheless, Mr. Gituma sprays fungicides and advises that the best way to deal with pests and diseases in pawpaw is to address the symptoms.

Water is one of the major impediments to Mr. Gituma's success given that the region is a dry area. Nevertheless, he has made a water reservoir that has a capacity of 40,000 litres supply to his farm and for domestic consumption.

All said and done, the agriculturalist notes that "One's hardwork determines what he or she will get at the end of the day."