



Mr. Julius Kaburu in Mworoto, Central Imenti Constituency, holding a sucker propagated banana

Sucker propagated Bananas, still a favorite of farmers

Fruits and vegetables provide three to four times more income cash than cereals, in addition to being prime sources of vitamins and minerals. One of the commonly grown fruit by small scale farmers is Banana, which is grown throughout the year and is well within the reach of the common man; probably that's why it is sometimes referred to as 'Poor man's apple'.

Banana is of international importance, in terms of export volume it tops and ranks second after citrus in terms of value. It is a globally important fruit crop with 97.5 million tonnes produced annually. As the demand for this fruit increase, the demand for new planting material is also increasing at a rapid rate.

Growing the traditional clonal propagation suckers cannot sustain the emerging demand which led to the development of the tissue culture variety. However, given the huge cost incurred to grow the tissue culture variety, many of the small scale farmers prefer to grow the sucker propagated variety which they find less costly. Growing tissue culture variety is costly; ranging from the seedlings, plant nutrients required, the protection chemicals, propping material and the labour needed.

Mr. Julius Kaburu in Mworoto, Central Imenti Constituency, in the interior dry parts of Meru County, is among the indomitable farmers who grows the sucker propagated variety and is doing well. Kaburu began growing bananas in 2012 after giving up his job as a Chauffeur in Nairobi.

"I had previously been employed by an Indian, in Highridge as his chauffeur; upon working for a period of 10 years with no meaningful salary, I decided to come back to the village and do farming," Mr. Kaburu shares. He started by growing tomatoes, watermelon and chillies in his quarter an acre but they did not do well, thus he decided to venture into banana farming which was doing well in the neighbourhood.