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**Package 86, Script 12  
December 2008**

**Orange sweetpotatoes**

**Notes to Broadcaster**

Africa is currently facing a problem of hunger and poverty on a large scale. Most economies in Africa are based on agriculture. Today many farmers are leaving agriculture to venture into other work, due to challenges in agriculture such as climate change, pests and diseases, decreasing soil fertility, price fluctuations and other problems.

But researchers have discovered new crops which are friendly to farmers. Among these is the orange sweetpotato. A few farmers have started growing this crop and have started getting results. The orange sweetpotato contains lots of vitamin A, which is vital for people's health. Cakes and breads can be made with fresh orange sweetpotato. Foods made with the fresh root retain vitamin A content, unlike making the root into flour. It grows more quickly than white sweetpotato and has a comparable yield.

This script is based on an actual interview, conducted with a farmer in Uganda. To produce this script on your station, you might choose to use voice actors to represent the interview participants, and change the wording in the script to make it suitable for your local situation. 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 interview, and that the program has been adapted for your local audience, but is based on a real interview.

*Music briefly and fade out*

**Host:** Our dear listeners, thank you for tuning in to CBS FM. Welcome to this agricultural show where we are going to talk about orange sweetpotatoes and their importance to our communities.

During the past years, orange sweetpotatoes were commonly known to be from Soroti, and were available in markets in the central region of Uganda and other regions during the off-season of the white sweet potato. Today, some Non Government Organizations such as VEDCO, in collaboration with HarvestPlus, have started a project to educate communities on the importance and value of orange sweetpotatoes.

In the studios tonight, our guest is a farmer who has discovered the importance of growing the orange sweetpotato. Nnalongo Ssekinguse Joyce is a resident of Kateente, Nakisunga Sub-County in Mukono District. Joyce, greet our listeners who have tuned in to this programme.

**Joyce:** I send my regards to all listeners of CBS, most especially those who are engaged in agriculture. Thanks for working and supporting the Kingdom of Buganda.

**Host:** How did you come to know about the orange sweetpotato?

**Joyce:** At first, this type of potato was not common in the central region. I had no interest in growing it because I was used to our local type of potato. In October 2007, the NGO VEDCO approached our farmer's group, and taught the 25 of us about the importance and benefits of growing and eating orange-fleshed sweetpotato.

**Host:** What is this importance and these benefits that you are talking about?

**Joyce:** We were taught by VEDCO, that if our families eat orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes, they will get plenty of vitamin A. As a result, they will not be frequently attacked by diseases such as diarrhea and measles, and if they do, they will recover quickly. We will also have improvement in sight and growth of children, hence pregnant and breast feeding mothers should eat orange-fleshed sweetpotato as well as children below five years old. Our white blood cells will be much more empowered to fight diseases and our skins will be improved in appearance. They also taught us about how to make money from this type of potato – using the fresh root, we can make chapatis and mandazis and sell the surplus. Chapatis made from the fresh root have lots of vitamin A.

**Host:** How did you start growing this type of potato?

**Joyce:** At first, VEDCO gave 240 potato vines to each farmer – 60 vines of each of four varieties, which are Kabode, Vita, Kakamega and Ejumula.

**Host:** How do you grow this type of potato?

**Joyce:** There is not much difference in the way we grow the orange-fleshed sweetpotato from the original white sweetpotatoes. The difference is the number of potato vines you plant in a potato mound.

When growing orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes, you plant three vines on one potato mound for better yield, and you plant them on the sides. You dig a shallow depression or bowl on top of the potato hill, in which you place locally made fertilizers from animal dung, animal urea, ash and grass if your soil is not fertile enough. In other words, you incorporate the fertilizers into the soil.

**Host:** Why all this work? It sounds tedious.

**Joyce:** According to our extension advisor, if you limit the number of potato vines on one potato mound, you expect higher yields and bigger potatoes. If you plant three vines on one mound, there will be less competition for soil nutrients and as a result big potatoes are expected. And of course, if you want better yields, you must add fertilizers to the soil. Also, controlling pests and diseases adds significantly to the yield.

**Host:** What is the difference between the four varieties of potatoes you mentioned?

**Joyce:** There are differences. For example, the Kabode type is large but short. It grows very quickly and it has a deeper orange colour.

**Host:** What about the other sweetpotato types?

**Joyce:** Vita grows tall but does not mature as fast as Kabode. It is also not as deep orange on the inside as Kabode.

**Host:** Does this mean that Vita does not have enough nutrients, especially vitamin A?

**Joyce:** No, Vita does have all the necessary levels of nutrients, including vitamin A. There is also another type – Ejumula – which is cream-coloured outside but also deep orange inside. Lastly, Kakamega looks a lot like Kawogo, which is a commonly grown type of potato in most parts of Uganda. It takes longer to harvest, growing for five months while the other types take four months. With Kakemaga, you can expect a lot of small-sized potatoes.

**Host:** In the beginning, how much land did you use when starting out this sweetpotato project?

**Joyce:** At first I used a quarter of an acre, because I thought it may have side effects on my land. There are some crops which are said to be harmful to the soil. You know, we farmers sometimes are skeptical about new enterprises. But this one has proved to be good. After the first harvest, I now grow orange sweetpotatoes on one acre, and expect to expand to three hectares.

**Host:** How was your first harvest?

**Joyce:** It was fruitful, because I got four sacks of about 120 kilograms each, making it about 480 kilograms, from the small area.

**Host:** Have you had any problems so far growing the orange sweetpotato?

**Joyce:** As usual, caterpillars attack our potato vines; also, we lack sufficient labour in our fields. To plant orange sweetpotatoes, you need to start with disease-free vines; otherwise your crop can get a viral infection. This is particularly the case with the Ejumula variety. At harvest time you have to harvest the whole crop and plant the next crop in a new field to minimize the spread of the disease. Normally we farmers have a tendency to carry out harvesting in stages; that is to say, you harvest what you are going to consume at a given time and continue until the whole field is harvested. But with Ejumula, it is preferable to harvest the whole field at once, in order to reduce the chance of disease. The other three orange sweetpotato types can be harvested as usual in stages as and when required by the household.

**Host:** What steps have you taken to overcome these problems?

**Joyce:** For pests and disease problems, we use simple cultural control practices. The commonly used cultural control is mixing animal dung, urea, ash and local grasses, letting it sit it for a week and then spraying it in the gardens with a watering can.

**Host:** Where do you sell the surplus from your fields?

**Joyce:** Every Monday, we have a community market in Nkokonjeru where we take our farm produce.

**Host:** How do you share information with others about orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes?

**Joyce:** We have a farmers' group called Munno Mukabi. There are 25 farmers who meet regularly and these are the ones who pass on the information about the sweetpotatoes to others.

**Host:** Do you have any future plans as you continue to grow orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes?

**Joyce:** As I said earlier, I am fighting hard to expand my garden so I can increase my yield and sell enough to pay school fees for my kids, and also take care of my family because my husband has grown old.

**Host:** In which areas do you need help to achieve your goals?

**Joyce:** We need a small loan to buy a small tractor, which would simplify work on our gardens. We also need to learn methods to process our potatoes into other products. But most important, we need to visit farmers who have become prosperous growing orange sweetpotatoes in other areas, so we can get more knowledge.

**Host:** Thank you for sharing your rich experience with us. Any messages to our farmers?

**Joyce:** Farmers from other parts of the country should start growing this type of potato because it is good for our families' health and there is a possibility of making good money from it.

**Host:** Joyce, thanks for being part of our programme tonight, and I look forward to hosting you next time.

*Closing signature tune and program identification*

**Acknowledgements**

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**Information sources**

* Interview with Nnalongo Ssekinguse Joyce of Kateente, Nakisunga Sub-County, Mukono District, Uganda, on June 10, 2008.
* HarvestPlus project staff.

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