

kobusingye-lovin-2019-03-17.mp4

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Kobusingye Lovin [00:00:11] I am the creator of Kati Farms Uganda Limited. Kati Farms is a fish processing enterprise that was founded by two women in 2012. We started this because there was a challenge of marketing some fish. And we really wanted to help in one way or the other and we also wanted to support ourselves since we had finished university. And we needed to have a job. So we're actually trying to solve an improvement challenge and yeah we started and we were two, and Kati Farms currently employes about 38 staff. Both in production, transportation, sales and distribution, among others.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:01:21] We hire 60 percent women and 40 percent men. But, majority of which are young people between 18 and 35.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:01:41] I went to university I studied business administration. And after that I went to work for farmers (unintelligible) society. I got some skills. I was challenged with marketing the farmers fish. A traditional trading methods were not helping out so I went to do research in improvement in fish processing technologies. I was successful I was the first person to invent a fish sausage. And after that it was my breakthrough. The product was doing well on the Ugandan market. I was getting calls from other neighboring countries. People were excited about my product. I won an award from Rabobank Foundation. I got 15000 euros and that was my first capital that I use it to set up my buisness. And improve and grow and we just have an office.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:02:47] The product that I sell?

James Thull [00:02:49] Well you said you invented a.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:02:51] Fish sausages.

James Thull [00:02:53] Fish sausages. OK. So that's just something you came up with.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:02:57] Yes. Something that I came up with and went to (unintelligible). And after that I had a product that was new, because before doing that product, there was nothing new that was exciting the market. But with my sausages I was able to people were, were able to listen to me. And say "look on this girl has something new to send to us. Let's listen to her". And from there I was able to sell other things like fillets on the market. Because they say "You have sausages, yes, can you also supply all the hotels and all that. Can also supply fresh fish, chilled fish, frozen fish something of that sort". And that is how my business started.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:03:58] We proccess tilapia, fillet tilapia and then catfish also. Mainly we started from farmers produce because since I worked for the farmers. And I was mainly, they were my, mainly my my contacts. So they were the people that give me that first capital in terms of credits. I would buy from them and pay them after like 3 weeks of selling my finished product.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:04:32] Yes. With this innovation the most exciting part of it is that it improves the shelf life of fish from one day to over a year. You can have a sausage a frozen sausage in the freezer for over a year without contamination, without. So it's helped us to sort out the challenges of post harvest. Improving the fish ability of fish and also improving the quality or the price it's a bit high. And fish sausage compared to meats, beef, is a the healthy choice products. So people associate with it as a white meat so the price for it is higher. So we have no competitors. So it was easy for us to save and grow and achieve what we have managed to achieve. Fish farming as a business in Uganda is an old technology, people started it a way long time ago. But it's it's good to you know. It's picked up more when, around 2008 and, and up. Where when people started cage farming in the lake. There was, there were also projects that came to support farmers.

James Thull [00:06:02] When you say the lake is that Lake Victoria that you're referring to?

Kobusingye Lovin [00:06:05] Lake Victoria, Lake Edward, Lake George there are many lakes. Both Victoria and others, so, farmers were trained on how to catfish farming. On how to do ponds, (unintelligible) ponds. And so with that training and then a fish project. People, were able to understand the fish the dynamics. Because before people talk like why would I go to grow fish when I can have, catch it free fish from the lake. But here they, they have taught them to grow fish. It is an income generation activity. You can have money for your children you can feed your family. So if you have a water catchment area around your land, please make an (unintelligible) pond and then feed the fish and they grow. Eight months you have something to say. And from there the response was good. People have really taken it on. I have seen it grow from low volumes to big volumes.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:07:19] No catfish grows faster than tilapia. It grows in any environment, it's more favorable. And but still they are managing the tilapia. The prices here for tilapia are a bit higher cause it's a traditional fish. You know its the name tilapia. It's an originated from here. So people really, ah it's a traditional fish that people associate with more, so it is more saleable than the other fish.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:07:59] Many of them end up missing once in a week. They they really think about changing (unintelligible) from the ordinary sources that they take to to maybe to fish and other you know foods, that they may want. Mainly fish is looked at. Fish is looked at as a product that is good for families. That is nutritious for babies, nutritious for pregnant mothers and good for family. At least every family can have fish in there on their table at least once a week. And to me that is already good enough. That is already that message that from the fish or fish these are good food for brain brain development many nutrition challenges. Something like that. And in addition to that we we came out with a powder for babies also. Which we want to market locally through maybe the refugee camps. Because they have it's cheap it's not expensive. So the powder is for human consumption. Mixing it in the porridge. Put it in soups, put it in food when you mix it to corn. So it's a product for low income but very highly nutritious. Yeah. So we also have that in total we have about 17 products. On the on our production line. Yeah but not so much. I have only the only thing I have noticed is that the fungi like sometimes water quality is dirty. So they have this itchy skin and all that. But I have not seen any outbreak, like a fish disease here and people are panicking and they don't know how to go around it. It's still it has still been safe. But that disease that bacterial infection that catches the fish here because farmers share nets.

James Thull [00:10:23] Yes yes.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:10:23] They borrow from one site to another. So can transfer that bacterial infection from one farm to the other. That is the only disease that I have witnessed in a long time.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:10:42] Yes there are very much things of concern in Uganda because, pollution for example, the lake if it is polluted and the there are no there are no shrubs around the fish cannot breath. It is, it is, hide (unintelligible) from this area because there has been interference. I'm going to hide somewhere else so the eggs that uh that were supposed to to be breeding and giving us more fish will not be there. So we the ministry the government and other stakeholders have really tried to have (unintelligible) control measures on on fish breeding areas that are gazetted. And I really think they have tried but sometimes the implementation phase is not well done because we lack resources to do (unintelligible). They have gazetted this area yes. But people still can encroach on that part. So by law it's there but the implementation is less because you need you need the boats you need fuel you need officers full time you know running around people and people are not easy. It's not something that they will voluntarily. They think of money as something very important. And not the environment. So I think by nature human beings we are selfish people and you think only of your family. First thinking about the nation. So that's his main challenge that we have.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:12:40] It's not limited as such but the gear the fishing gear that's you you're supposed to use, there is the standard for it. If it's supposed to catch tilapia there is a standard for tilapia nets. Standard for you know the zone at which you're supposed to fish, is gazetted like this area you can catch tilapia and this further area you catch Nile perch. So I think they are doing well and the fish itself I think we really have, I think we are one of the luckiest people I can say because this is fish that's just is free of charge. It is in the lake. You've invested nothing. It's just grows and grows and grows. And the only thing we can do is to to to have that self control self monitoring system whereby that traders, actually Uganda is now earining a lot of money from the Nile perch fish. Because it is export grade and that is it's a commercial product. More than all these other species. It is the highest selling fish and a lot of money traders people are depending on it. It is exported to EU markets exported to the U.S. exported to United Arab Emirates and other countries. In the tons and tons. And many people are really earning and employed and cause of that. So that system that has been set the regulations that have been set. For a Nile perch it must be this size to be caught. You can't catch this. If you catch this you're penalized. That is how that regulation is helping to make the lake more productive. And also farmers have come like a few people will have also intervene by doing farming. And reducing their pressure. That will be put on the lake all the timing or money. So some people can now buy from farmers and others can still catch from the lake.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:15:00] We are all concerned about climate change. It's something that we should not take lightly. We should devise means and ways. We have seen less flooding. We have seen less volumes reduction. We worry because we don't know why we wait for scientific explanations. All right the lake is that water is way down. Like some places where the ships used to dock. Now you can find the dips of the low tides. This survey from Tanzania to Uganda the ship cannot come because of the water volume that has gone down. So where we are worried quite worried. And we really want to whichever means possible to support anything that can help our, our lakes and rivers natural sources be, be prevented from hindering farther. Due to climate change you know.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:16:14] I hope to grow my business into a multinational you know. Not just a Ugandan based company. I have tried since 2012 when I started. I was young I was 27 years old I really had ambition to start a business of my own, financial independency. And also to motivate young people like me who are looking at the government's jobs and you know like you like, how if I don't work for ministry of this so and so, I am not a fitting person or I would be deprived of good life. But you risk yourself you risk your your, you know your risk and say no here I am. I want to put this challenge. If you work hard you can equally enjoy good life. Having the private company and building it. You know I have enjoyed the experience of seeing my company grow. I started with 800 dollars of capital that I had which I had saved from my previous job. I had the job where I (unintelligible). Equivalent of that and to me, it is a breakthrough for me it's an encouraging thing for my father. I think it renews expectations. Like he didn't believe that his daughter can set up a business. And grow it from 800 dollars to over one million dollar in the space, in the space of about 6 7 years. Yes. So. To me that is it I've done my best. I have said in the last year we have just started Kati Farms in Nigeria. We have hope to go to Nigeria now. Because it is one of the biggest producers of catfish. They are known to bring fish sausages. And I have passion for changing the catfish sector in Nigeria. Because I know I have the technology that can transform it from just being a traditional catfish growing country to industrialize catfish sector which can supply to other parts of the world. It's the biggest market through which Africa can reach other places. And so I have already opened up a company just within a local investor there and I'm looking forward to... on working on the legalities and factory setups and all that. So I am hoping that within the next two years, I'll be able to root through many African and foreign countries based both in Uganda and Nigeria. I'm also looking forward to export one of the most exciting fish products that is not selling here in my country or in Africa with the Japanese, because I've been discussing with them. I've done trials sent my my trial order. I'm looking forward to doing 300,000 metric tons of fish finished fish products to the Japan market per year. So to me that he'd be a very huge success. Because I would have I will have achieved I would have avoided most of the risks. You know to do business you must be sure that if I trade the risks are less the profit margin is high. The people are getting more. It's not about me alone. I mainly work with farmers in the country and I look at economic empowerment as for the farmers. I look at employment you know for the people that are working with us and I look at economic development. I pay my taxes and everyone is happy. Win win for everybody.

Kobusingye Lovin [00:20:46] I really wish to encourage the Ugandan girls. The Ugandan African women that, in life no there's nothing that is provided on a silver platter. You really have to work hard. And once you work hard it is the ground is leveled for everybody. It's not that because you are black or white or. It's just that work hard. The level is you see just level. You achieve your dreams through hard no shortcut.