



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/improving-agricultural-productivity-uganda-0>

Improving Agricultural Productivity in Uganda

Standing next to her healthy oxen, Grace Opono explains how new conservation techniques have doubled her maize yield over just two seasons. She is also earning a second income by providing tilling services to neighbors with her oxen. She tells me she can now afford to pay the school fees for her children and reinvest money in her land.

This story of achievement shows that USDA's Food for Progress Program is making a difference.

On a recent trip to Uganda, I saw first-hand the difference USDA-funded projects are making in people's lives. The Food for Progress Program, administered by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, helps developing countries and emerging democracies introduce and expand free enterprise in the agricultural sector.

U.S. agricultural commodities donated to recipient countries are sold on the local market and the proceeds are used to support agricultural, economic or infrastructure development programs administered by government agencies and private volunteer organizations (PVOs). From 1987 to 2007, northern Uganda was relatively closed to development and investment due to civil war. The displacement of more than two million people left the predominantly rural area with widespread food insecurity and untapped agricultural potential.

However, thanks to Food for Progress, two international PVOs are implementing projects to connect smallholder farmers with a revitalized agricultural market. The National Cooperative Business Association-Cooperative League of the United States of America International (NCBA-CLUSA) and Mercy Corps are working to help local farmers increase yields and improve their food security and household incomes. NCBA-CLUSA's Conservation Farming Initiative works with area farmers to conservation farming techniques and technologies for maize and beans that will increase yields without diminishing natural resources.

Farmers showed off their fields of tall maize stalks, which had flourished despite delayed rainfall

I met with other beneficiaries who, like Grace, had been trained by NCBA-CLUSA on one technique - using a pair of oxen pulling a specially designed "ripper" to break through the hard-pan of the soil. Farmers showed off their fields of tall maize stalks, which had flourished despite a delayed rainfall because the technique allows the topsoil to retain more moisture. More than 4,244 farmers have realized increased yields and are now sharing their knowledge and training with over 55,000 more growers. As part of a holistic approach to agricultural development, NCBA-CLUSA is also helping smallholder farmer groups improve their access to credit, farming inputs like seeds and fertilizer, and wholesale buyers.

Further north near Uganda's border with South Sudan, Mercy Corps is implementing its Revitalizing Agricultural Incomes and New Markets (RAIN) program. Mercy Corps has helped build a viable market for agricultural products in the District of Lamwo by providing smallholder farmers with access to capital in an area that had no financial institutions. Through the Food for Progress project, Mercy Corps assisted Postbank, a national microfinance institution, in opening a branch in the district. I had the opportunity to hear from a group of female farmers who had just taken out their second agricultural loan from Postbank. They paid off their first loan after using it to buy improved sesame seeds, which gave them a larger harvest and more earnings. Mercy Corps has been able to make the critical connections with financial institutions, agro-input suppliers, and buyers needed to establish a vibrant agricultural market serving more than 150,000 farmers.

Uganda is one of 19 [priority countries](#) under the President's Feed the Future initiative, where the country strategy is to improve food security and reduce malnutrition through agricultural value-chain development in maize, beans, and coffee. Through Food for Progress projects like these, USDA is making a major contribution towards the U.S. government's Feed the Future goals.

This post originally [appeared](#) on the USDA blog.