



Dairy Farmers' Network (DAFAN) – Uganda



December 2023



Back ground

The Dairy Farmers' Network (DAFAN) is a farmer organization that is registered under the companies **Act No.1 of 2012** or as a business under the business name registration **Act Cap 110**.

The network has a membership of over 300 dairy farmers (49% female, 10% youths) and development partners. The Network currently operates in the districts of Mukono, Buikwe, Mpigi, Luweero, Nakaseke, Lira, Gulu, Nakasongola, Kampala, Jinja, Mityana, Kyenjojo, Mbarara, Wakiso, Kayunga and others.



Vision

DAFAN shall bench mark for modern and improved climate smart dairy farming technologies and innovations in Uganda and beyond while enhancing the quality of the environment.



Mission

DAFAN promotes a practical farmer oriented dairy farming network geared towards production of safe, quality assured products in a sustainable manner that underpins the future of dairy farming industry in Uganda.

Objectives

- ◆ Develop a robust dairy farmers' cantered network aimed at enhancing information gathering and sharing.
- ◆ Increase household income through enhancing dairy farmers' awareness on sustainable and profitable climate smart dairy farming technologies and innovations.
- ◆ Foster collaboration with key players in development of dairy farming in Uganda and beyond.
- ◆ Create an integrated dairy value chain system which is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy.
- ◆ Build a strong bargaining, market oriented farmers' network with the capacity to explore local, regional and international market.
- ◆ Participate in the development (research) and promotion of climate smart dairy farming technologies, innovations and managing practices.
- ◆ Bring services and inputs closer to rural communities through establishing "resource centres and demonstration farms".
- ◆ Encourage families, youth and women to start commercial dairy farming as a means of wealth creation.



Executive Committee

DAFAN has an executive committee which consists of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, General Secretary and Zone/Cluster Leaders who represent different areas/districts where farmers come from. The Zone/Cluster leaders help in mobilization and communication.

Current Executive

Dr. Sekimpi Patrick
Chairperson
0772470060

Mrs. Kibirango Immaculate
Treasurer
0777445559

Mr. Muhairwe Julius
Zone leader,
Wakiso
0772658055

Mrs. Kaliba Kitalengwa
Zone leader,
Fortportal
0772641754

Mr. Bariyo Benson
Vice Chairperson
0782850500

Mrs. Namabiro Martha Matovu
General Secretary
0755112810,
0774112810

Mr. Sabika Moses
Zone leader,
Mukono
0752975221,
0782975221

Prof. (Dr.) Kabirizi Jolly M. L.
Zone leader,
Entebbe
0777912716

Mr. Kaggwa Daniel
DAFAN Savings Group
0772489932
0704489932

Mr. Lugoloobi Henry Sight
Zone leader, Gayaza
0772508275,
0704508275

Maj. Kawesa Kigozi
Zone leader, Nakaseke
0772343150



Source of funds

DAFAN currently sources its funds through:

- Projects funded by development partners such as Bimeda, Semex, Dairy Development Authority (DDA), URUS, Coopers Ltd and other.
- Payment of membership fee.
- DAFAN has a committee that is responsible for the preparation and submission of project proposals for funding.



Membership registration

A membership fee of Ushs 150,000 (about U\$ 40) is paid on registration and annual fee of Ushs 100,000 (U\$ about 27) for the smooth running of the group growth.

DAFAN ACTIVITIES

(1) Monthly study meetings

DAFAN members hold monthly meetings to discuss dairy farming challenges, possible interventions and to plan activities for group members. The meetings are held on a member's farm or a nearby research institute/ training hall.



Dairy farmers workshop held at Silver springs Bugolobi where the guest presenters were two Irish nationals, Dr Padraig Hyland and Dr. Nick McHardy and Mr. Pierre Marx, a South African national.

During the monthly study meetings, an expert is invited to train members on a given topic related to dairy farming. The workshops are open to all farmers and youths. This can also be done in conjunction with other development partners. After the meeting, members visit the farm or research institute to share ideas on dairy cattle management, nutrition, disease control, record keeping, breeds and breeding and others. Members also share their challenges and success stories.

(2) Farm visits/ agritourism

“Agritourism” is a form of commercial enterprise that links dairy cattle production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of educating the visitors/farmers while generating income for the farm owner. Agritourism gives dairy farmers and youth an opportunity for direct marketing of their products to consumers.



A farmer visiting Gaza Dairy Farm in Busiika, Luwero district owned by Dr. Sekimpi Patrick

(3) Fodder/feed production

Feed and fodder are pivotal to the dairy sector, accounting for 60 to 70% of total costs. Proper feeding improves animal immunity, health, welfare, and reproductive performance; enables higher productivity under a given management regime and contributes to environmental sustainability by converting energy and nutrients from land that is unusable by humans into highly nutritious food. However, the demand for high quality feed resources has outstripped supply, leaving dairy cattle undernourished and impacting productivity that compromises the livelihoods of many farmers dependent on the dairy sector. DAFAN empowers youth, men and women with skills and knowledge on fodder/feed production as a measure to mitigate the gross challenge of poor dairy cattle nutrition and unemployment.

Mrs. Jolly Asiimwe, one of the Directors of Itungo Pastures in Wakiso district and a member of DAFAN is involved in commercial production of fodder varieties such as Rhodes grass, Pakchong 1 Super Napier grass, forage sorghum, alfalfa, stylo, siratro, glycine and different sweet potatoes varieties.



Mrs. Jolly Asiimwe, Itungo Pastures carrying Pakchong 1 Napier grass fodder

Mrs. Asiimwe says,

“Fodder production is a profitable business since most fodder crops mature in about 3 months. For sweet potato vines, for example NASPOT 11, one can harvest 5-6 tonnes and for Wagabolige up to 7 tonnes of forage, where each ton goes for Ugshs 500,000 (US\$ 135). The farm sell about 25 tons/season/acre of maize silage earning Ugshs 35million (US\$ 9,460) from 4 acres. This is good business that you cannot get from producing maize grain/season”.

(4) Commercial production of pasture seed/planting materials

Availability of affordable pasture seed/planting materials is a very important input in dairy cattle production and sustainability is not guaranteed if access to improved pasture cultivars is hampered. With the projected increase in demand for dairy products, more feed and fodder will be required and natural pastures alone will not sustain dairy cattle production. Limited/high cost or/and poor quality pasture seed supply remains one of the major challenges affecting adoption of improved forage cultivars in dairy cattle systems in Uganda. Members of DAFAN produce quality pasture seed/planting materials for sale to livestock farmers.

Mr. Vincent Lutwama, a youth and member of DAFAN says,

“As pasture seed producers, we are aware that different farmers have different pasture needs depending on the type of animals being reared and management systems. So, we produce climate smart pasture seeds for beef and dairy cattle, rabbits, pigs and goats. The improved pastures in stock have a high growth rate, biomass yields, nutritive value and tolerance to drought thus solving the biggest problem of inadequate quality and quantity of feeds during prolonged dry seasons”.

Lutwama smiles to the bank

“I sell the seed towards and during the planting season while hay and silage are sold during the dry season. From Rhodes grass seed alone, I make about Ugshs 2.5 million (about US\$ 680) per acre/year. After harvesting the seed, the remaining residues are cut back, dried and baled for sale as low-quality hay”.

(5) Service provision for fodder/feed production

The idea of service delivery for silage, hay and concentrate feed production is practiced by some DAFAN members. The members offer services for mechanized harvesting and processing of pastures into hay or silage. Intensification of forage planting also create increased demand for these services, make investments in machinery interesting and create jobs.



Mrs. Martha Matovu (a youth and member of DAFAN) makes silage for farmers and hires out forage choppers

(6) Participatory on-farm research

DAFAN members participate in on-farm trials to develop climate smart dairy cattle technologies and innovations in collaboration with local and international research institutions and organizations. The major objective is to develop technologies to address challenges of poor dairy cattle performance.

The “**Climate smart sweet potato vines silage innovation**” was developed at Mr. Henry Lugoloobi’s (a member of DAFAN) Sight Farm, Namulonge, Wakiso district. The study was funded by the International Potato Center (CIP) and implemented by a youth group (*Bavubuka Tweekembe*) in collaboration with Makerere University, Kyakuwa Farm, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), National Livestock Resources Research Institute (NALIRRI) and other stakeholders. The adoption of sweet potato vines silage innovation has reduced the need for costly commercial feeds and mitigate both the wastage caused by spoilage of fresh sweet potato vines at harvest and recurrent feed scarcity during the dry season. This has translated into a lucrative business opportunity for Agri-Small and Medium Enterprises. Youth, women and men working in urban food markets are earning income through sale of sweet potato vines to farmers to make silage. This has contributed to a clean environmental in markets, reduced disease incidences due to poor hygiene and improved their livelihoods.

Pakchong 1 Napier grass (“Super Napier”) was introduced from Thailand, evaluated and promoted in Uganda by a team of researchers from The Green Elephant, a Dutch/Ugandan private enterprise looking to contribute to clean, affordable and sustainable energy in Uganda. The Green Elephant is a member of DAFAN. The research team included Prof. (Dr.) Jolly Kabirizi, a senior forage scientist who is also a member of DAFAN. Super Napier grass is currently revolutionizing small-scale dairy cattle farming in Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi and Kenya. Smallholder dairy cattle farmers attest that milk production has doubled as a result of feeding Super Napier grass fodder supplemented with forage legumes, minerals, vitamins and a concentrate.

(7) Regional farm tours

Every year, DAFAN members hold at least one regional tour across East and Central Africa. The objective is to study how other farmers manage their dairy farms as well as networking with dairy companies in those countries. These tours involve trainings and farm visits among others. DAFAN members have visited dairy farms and cooperative organizations in Kiambu, Naivasha and Eldoret, Kenya.



DAFAN members arrive at One Farm in Kiambu, Kenya |



(8) International trips

Bimeda International sponsored DAFAN Chairperson to visit dairy farms in the Republic of Ireland on behalf of DAFAN. He toured four dairy farms, the Irish Farmers Federation and Arrabawn cooperative. He later shared his experience with other DAFAN members.

Dr. Sekimpi Patrick with an Irish dairy farmer |

(9) Uganda Best Farmers Awards

The “Uganda Best Farmers Competition” is an annual initiative aimed at recognizing and promoting excellence in farming practices in Uganda. It is designed to showcase the best practices, innovations, and technologies in agriculture, and to encourage more farmers to adopt these practices. It is held annually to celebrate farmers, showcase how farming is contributing to economic development of the country and rally the public to embrace commercial farming.

Uganda Best Farmers Competition are organized by Vision Group in partnership with DFCU Bank, KLM Airlines, Koudijs Animal Nutrition, the Netherlands Embassy among others. Since the competitions began in 2014, six DAFAN members have received awards for being among the top best 13 farmers in Uganda. The 13 winners of best farmers competition are facilitated to fly to the Netherlands for transformative learning.



Henry Lugoloobi Ssalongo, Director, Sight Farm-Namulonge was declared 2023's second best farmer in Uganda. Congratulations



Mr. Lugoloobi credits growing high quality fodder and good genetics for his improved milk yield



Benefits of being a Member of DAFAN

- (1) Social capital:** DAFAN is a platform with members from different sectors. Members are very cooperative and ready to offer help beyond dairy farming. DAFAN members contributed to the printing of a book produced by Prof. (Dr.) Jolly Kabirizi, *“Unlocking the potential of feed production technologies, innovations and management practices of smallholder dairy cattle farmers in Uganda. February 2023. ISBN. 9789970675951”*. Many farmers and youth within and outside Uganda attest that they have been able to improve their dairy farming business and/or income using information in this book. *“Remember your social capital is your net worth”*.
- (2) Sense of belonging (DAFAN reference as a member):** If you need a reference letter as a farmer.
- (3) Information sharing:** Members enjoy a lot of benefits that includes input procurement, market information, trainings, information, high quality dairy breeds/semen and veterinary services. In addition to learning life skills, youth who raise dairy cows are learning how to produce food that is wholesome and nutritious. Boys and girls and young men and women are entitled to the kind of training and experience that will enable them to enjoy life to the fullest and to meet with eagerness, assurance, and satisfaction their social and economic responsibilities of both the present and the future.
- (4) Collaboration/Networking:** It is a bridge between farmers, government, non-government and international organisations. Through DAFAN, some members have received milking equipment, forage choppers and/or pasture seed from the Dairy Development Authority (DDA), Uganda and sexed semen from URUS and The National Animal Genetic Resources Centre and Data Bank. DAFAN members have been collaborating with Makerere University, National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), International Potato Center (CIP), Heifer International and others to develop and/or disseminate improved dairy cattle technologies.
- (5) Dairy Marketing Strategy:** Members advertise and market their services, products and inputs through DAFAN platforms such as DAFAN- Uganda WhatsApp group and website. Some members have purchased milk cooling equipment. Members benefit from a range of schemes to further improve their dairy farming business.
- (6) National and international consultancies:** DAFAN members have participated in national and international consultancies such as *‘Cross boarder study on sustainable use of rangelands and cross-border natural grazing resources: the case of Karamoja pastoral area in Uganda’* funded by African Union and IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) and *“Training of feed service providers (youths) and farmers in silage and microbes production”* funded by Heifer International.
- (7) Joint savings account:** Members have a savings account to boost their farm activities.
- (8) Farm visits as hosts:** Members are given first chance to host the farm visits or as may be discussed from the executive committee.

Way Forward

- (1) DAFAN will continue to form clusters, set up dairy collection centres, in different zones/clusters which will help farmers sell their milk and easy access to many dairy farming products.
- (2) Regional clusters will be formed and hold meetings to ensure a sustainable dairy farming business. The clusters will serve to promote the vision, mission and objectives of DAFAN.
- (3) DAFAN members will continue to source for funds for projects aimed at improving productivity along the dairy value chain.



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