

# Farm AFRICA

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## Case Study: John Yugi

**Sixty-two-year-old John Yugi is just one farmer from the Kochogo location, near Kisumu, to reap the benefits from a new cassava variety. John has one wife and eight children – all but two are dependent on him for food.**



As with the majority of farmers in this region, John has been growing maize for five years, and sugar cane as a cash crop before that. He stopped growing sugar cane when delays in factory collections meant it wasn't fit for processing. When John attended a community meeting, held by the Community Rehabilitation and Environmental Protection programme, his life changed. Here he learned about the new varieties of cassava now available. As part of the programme John was shown new farming techniques; for example he was taught about planting the new crop, taking one step between plants, in rows, to ensure the correct spacing is achieved.

This year's severe drought has seen his maize harvest all but fail. Curled leaves and little corn spread as far as the eye can see. But growing in between is a new variety of Cassava. Talking through an interpreter John explained: "I used to grow the old, local variety but I now grow the new variety. The first used to take two years to reach maturity, this second one takes just nine months. I now have around three acres interplanted with maize from last season.

"I used to struggle to grow maize which meant I struggled to pay for my children to go to school. Now I can pay for their school fees, I can buy them the books and the uniforms they need."

From this farm he has to grow enough food to feed his family and, with what is leftover, sell at local markets. This is where cassava really starts to make sense. The crop requires only three weedings per season and needs no inputs to ensure successful growth. So versatile is the crop, one acre of cassava earns John 50,000 Kenyan shillings, or about £320, compared to one acre of maize, earning him around 5,400 shillings or around £30. And with climate change really starting to bite, cassava is a more resilient crop than the former favourite, maize.

John now plans to plant more cassava next season. Of his five acres, this will mean four acres planted with cassava, with a single acre left for other crops.

"This variety also tastes good – it all goes very quickly", he added.