



Environmental Protection through Expanding Lemon grass growing and Education in Uganda

Activity 3.8: Expanding lemon grass production and carryout harvesting and delivery of 20 tons of lemon grass to the distiller

No	Date	Location
1	June 9 th 2018	Kabanyi
2	Oct 1 st 2018	Kisombwa
3	Jan 10 th 2019	Kabanyi
4	Marc 14 th 2019	Kisombwa

Introduction:

This report presents a brief outline of raw lemon grass collection from SORAK supported lemon grass farmers. These include women (4), men (5) and youth (10). This is a continuous activity that repeatedly required every 60 days during rainy season.

Purpose of activity:

The purpose of this activity is to ensure continuous supply of raw lemon grass for eventual distillation of essential lemon grass oil. It also aims at providing a source of livelihood to lemon grass farmers. This is because the farmers are able to earn some income that is provided by SORAK every time raw lemon grass is harvested from the farmers. It also indirectly contributes to environmental protection. This is because lemon grass provides a grass cover to the soil hence preventing soil erosion which is common on hilly plateau landscapes of the project area.

Participants:

The collection of lemon grass was involved by different farmers in the farming communities. 5 SORAK staff and 4 other support manual labors went to visit farmers and found out grass to collect. .

Lemon grass is collected from the communities of Kibalinga (5 farmers), Nabingoola (5 farmers), Kiyuni (9 farmers) sub counties among others where our members have been supported to grow.

Facilitators:

The activity of lemon grass collection is facilitated/supervised by SORAK staff namely Matovu Bazilio and Mafabi Martin who worked with a hired truck driver and 2 youths who participate in loading and offloading lemon grass.

Activities:

1. Arrangement of collecting schedule include making phone calls and informing farmers to harvest. This includes telling them the harvesting time and when they should expect the collecting truck.
2. Hiring a collection truck and a driver.

3. Mobilization of farmers/make appointments and agree of harvesting date and time. Harvesting takes place generally every 60 days. Harvest was conducted by 19 farmers during this period.
4. Travelling to villages to collect lemon grass
5. Loading and delivering lemon grass to SORAK lemon distiller shade. SORAK was able to collect a total of 48 tones of raw grass during this period.
6. Spreading the lemon grass while in shade to wither for 4-7 days before distilling. Distilling is done by SORAK staff and support temporary staffs.



Off loading newly delivery lemon grass



Filling gunny bags to spread the grass for withering



A bulk of delivered lemon grass



Distillation in process, SORAK Director bending after supervising the emptying of the distiller pan.

Outcomes:

The collection of lemon grass for continuous distillation had the following outcomes;

1. Provided an opportunity to farmers to generate income. Each farmer produces an average of 1500kgs which is equivalent to 300,000 Uganda shillings per harvest. We measure and pay 200 Uganda shillings per kilo of raw lemon grass.

2. Motivated farmers to grow lemon grass for income generation and also to help in protecting the soil from agents of soil erosion. More farmers started growing lemon grass as a soil erosion control grass but on a small scale.
3. Production of essential oil from distillation for selling and creating soaps or candles.
4. SORAK was able to produce 8 liters of oil every time and we harvested 12 tons of raw material every 60 days. We have however not sold and kept the oil in order to sell after adding values.

Major challenges:

1. Impassable roads during rainy season.
2. The long dry season that made some farmers yield less grass than expected.
3. Declining grass harvests which affect SORAK to collect less volume of lemon grass than planned; For instance, in the last two quarters, we were able to collect 10-12 tones every 60 days. However this was less than the 20 tones anticipated.

Recommendations:

1. To encourage more women and youth to plant lemon grass because they have shown high interest in growing the crop. It can be grown near homesteads as a compound beautification plant.
2. SORAK should encourage communities to apply many other ways of environmental protection. One of the most important strategy is planting trees like eucalyptus and fruit trees (like jackfruit, mangoes) which will ensure environmental protection as well as meeting needs of communities such as income generation and improvement of diet.

Conclusion:

Lemon grass collection from farmers helps to ensure continuous linkage with our members in the communities. However SORAK and communities are facing challenges of declining production due to unstable climate/weather changes that has made some gardens to dry up. Hence decreasing production has discouraged some of our farmers to grow lemon grass. In the future, SORAK is going to emphasize on other strategies as well in terms of environmental protection namely trees planting and production of briquettes since we believe that combination of various approaches are more effective and sustainable for environmental protection in communities.