



“Green to Grow online course is helping my mango business during the COVID-19 crisis”- mango processor narrates her experience

[SWITCH AFRICA GREEN - GREEN TO GROW](#) · MONDAY, MAY 18, 2020 · READING TIME: 3 MINUTES

For 42-year-old Pauline Okubasu, 2020 seemed like the year when her business would thrive and expand customer base. This start-up entrepreneur who sells dried mangoes among other fruits had plans to start supplying to retail shops by the end of April this year, a plan that has been shelved until further notice. She had also introduced new packaging for her products in anticipation of the new market she was targeting.

However, 2020 has proved that uncertainties arise and evolve so quickly to affect the business environment in unexpected ways. Besides affecting people's health, the COVID-19 pandemic has also caused an economic crisis and food industry players such as Pauline's company- Azaavi Foods have not been spared. Before the pandemic, this start-up experienced a steady increase in sales.

This mother of three who resides in Nairobi quit formal employment in the marketing industry to solely start Azaavi Foods in 2018, a company she aims to build to a family enterprise. She arrived at this bold decision after reading a publication on Kenya's food security situation, whereby a huge number of people in Kenya were suffering from malnutrition. "Increase in post-harvest losses was listed among the root causes to this epidemic", Pauline explains.

Due to restriction of movement and physical distancing becoming the new norm, Azaavi Foods has scaled down this important value addition. Part-time workers have also been rendered jobless due to the cut back in operations.

"The Covid-19 situation has affected Azaavi foods to the extent that we are donating most of the produce we had processed, especially dried mangoes. Sales have stagnated and this is a huge drawback for my business." Says Pauline.

So, what is Pauline doing to salvage the situation? Azaavi Foods has partnered with online e-commerce platforms in Kenya to increase visibility and sales, in addition to their regular marketing through social media.

"Thanks to the Green to Grow project, I am equipped with the necessary skills required to launch and run my business in diverse economic conditions. Due to the digital and business model and planning knowledge acquired, my business will survive any storm." Reiterates Pauline.

Having successfully completed an online course on Access to Finance and business planning led by Sefea Consulting and Etimos Foundation in May 2020, Pauline who is a marketer by profession firmly states that given the situation, online trainings are the new normal. She is glad that Green to Grow has creatively adapted to technology to reach MSMEs.

“I am grateful that Green to Grow took me in as one of their entrepreneurs, at a time when my business was only two months old! We are building a global brand, offering nutritious snack options, and providing a living to many homes through employment creation!” she adds.

This project is funded by the European Union through the Switch Africa Green Programme. It is implemented by a consortium of organisations led by Etimos Foundation in partnership with; Kenya National Chambers of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), E4impact Foundation, Tangaza University College (TUC), Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), SEFEA Consulting, and Cassa Padana.