



‘It is unusual that we are processing offseason! - MSME reveals how they are adding value to mangoes despite the COVID-19 crisis

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The COVID 19 crisis is causing dramatic consequences for businesses all around the world, but not for all of them. For Ms. Jane Maina, for example, the Covid-19 crisis has created a boom for her business. A mango processor and co-founder of Vert

limited, this entrepreneurs' business is advantaged since they can still reach and buy produce from smallholder farmers with off-season fruits.

Vert limited is therefore able to process more single strength mango pulp which they resell to juice processors. 'It is unusual that we are processing mango pulp from offseason produce. We attribute this to the fact that most smallholder farmers and retailers cannot access local and regional markets due to travel restrictions. Vert limited has the upper hand since the company is registered as an essential produce company. Movement for us is therefore not restricted and we can access different counties to purchase mangoes.' Says Jane.

Based in Machakos County, Vert Limited is a business co-owned by Jane and her husband. Initially, they specialized in the export of fresh produce since inception in 2000. However, in 2014 they ventured into mango processing. 'We ventured into mango processing to transform the fruits, reduce post-harvest losses, and add more life to them!' Says the mother of seven. 'Initially, our company focussed on export of fresh vegetables to the European market, but after the volcanic ash crisis experienced in Europe in 2010 that disrupted air transport, we decided to venture into local and regional markets. This marked the birth of the mango processing enterprise!'

For this 53-year-old, it was invaluable to attend trainings by the Green to Grow project. This was an opportunity to interact one on one with mango farmers and listen to the challenges they face as producers. As for the just concluded online training on Access to Finance and business planning led by Etimos Foundation and SEFEA Consulting, Jane says that she got information on how to realign her business plan especially since her mango processing business is still young.

So, how is Jane coping with the pandemic at a personal level, bearing in mind that hers is a large family? 'It is an opportunity to spend more time with my family. I am

a mother of two boys and a guardian to five girls. This means that during this period, I am a manager, parent, teacher, and businesswoman. My children are all grown up and understand that this situation has affected people in most parts of the world, not just Kenya. Although there is the uncertainty of when normalcy will resume, we remain positive!