

YOUTH INNOVATIONS

Rising Agripreneur Mkami Tetere: Leading Tanzania's Agricultural Future with a Passion for Spices

Published: 24 October 2024

Kyela, Mbeya -

"Discover the bold and authentic flavors of Africa in Tanzania with Mkami Spices Co. Ltd! Experience the ultimate taste sensation that will take your meals to the next level. Mkami Spices is a dynamic company located in Kyela, Mbeya, Tanzania, led by the passionate and vibrant Tanzanian entrepreneur, Mkami Tetere. Ready to take your taste buds on a journey they'll never forget? Contact Mkami Spices today at Tel No +255 743 532 50 3 and let the adventure begin!" -**Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO SAGCOT Centre**

Mkami's entrepreneurial journey showcases the transformative power of small businesses in driving economic growth. Her company, Mkami T. Limited (Mkami Products), is on the way to becoming a dynamic force in the food processing industry. Specializing in a diverse range of spices, including tea masala, pilau masala, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper, garlic, and lemongrass tea, Mkami Products exemplifies the potential of entrepreneurship to uplift communities and foster development.

Mkami Yusuph Tetere, a 29-year-old entrepreneur from Kyela, Mbeya, is making waves in Tanzania's agricultural sector by merging her entrepreneurial spirit with a deep commitment to farming. Her journey into agriculture began with a simple but powerful realization: to ensure the quality of the spices she sold, she needed to control the production process. "I decided to start farming ginger and rice because I saw an opportunity to grow what I was selling. This way, I can ensure the quality of my products and control the entire process from farm to market," Mkami explains.

A Vision for Value Addition

Mkami's approach to farming transcends mere cultivation; it's rooted in the concept of value addition. "When I harvest my ginger, I don't just sell it raw. I process it, which adds value and increases my profits. This is important because it allows me to offer better quality products to my customers," she says. By processing her crops, Mkami enhances her business's profitability and contributes to the local economy by creating employment opportunities. "I've provided two temporary jobs for young people who help with my farming activities. It feels good to give back to the community," she adds.

Overcoming Challenges with Resilience

Farming, however, is fraught with challenges, and Mkami has faced her share of them. Crop theft has been a significant issue, threatening to undo her hard work. But her response

exemplifies her resilience. By hiring local youth to safeguard her farm, she has mitigated the risk of theft and ensured the continuity of her operations. “One of the biggest challenges I’ve faced is theft. Seeing your hard work stolen is heartbreaking, but I’ve learned to be proactive. I hired a young man from the area to watch over the farm, which has helped a lot,” she shares. This proactive approach reflects the innovative solutions young farmers like Mkami are developing to protect their investments.

Commitment to Sustainable Farming Practices

Mkami’s farming philosophy is deeply intertwined with sustainability. She understands that the health of the soil directly impacts crop yield and quality, and she is dedicated to maintaining soil health through careful management practices. “I make sure to take care of the soil because I know that if the soil is healthy, my crops will be too. It’s about thinking long-term,” she explains. Her interest in sustainable agriculture extends to exploring modern technologies like drip irrigation to enhance efficiency and productivity. “I’m interested in using drip irrigation. I think it could help me save water and increase my yields,” Mkami says.

Expanding Horizons: Future Goals

Looking to the future, Mkami is ambitious about expanding her farming ventures. Her goals include increasing the variety of spices she grows and adding value to her products to reach a broader market. “My dream is to increase the number of farms I have and grow more spices. I also want to keep adding value to what I produce to reach more customers and build a sustainable business,” she shares. Her forward-thinking approach positions her as a key player in Tanzania’s agricultural transformation, contributing significantly to the nation’s food security and economic development.

Engaging with the Community: A Collaborative Approach

Mkami’s vision for agriculture extends beyond her success. She believes in the power of collaboration and is eager to share her experiences and knowledge with other young farmers. “I think it’s important for young farmers like me to work together and learn from each other. We can achieve so much more if we share our experiences and ideas,” she says. This collaborative spirit underscores the importance of community in driving collective agricultural success.

A Bright Future in Agriculture

Mkami Yusuf Tetere embodies the new generation of Tanzanian farmers—innovative, resilient, and committed to making a difference in their communities. Her journey highlights the pivotal role of youth in spearheading agricultural transformation, and her story is poised to inspire many more young people to consider farming as a viable and rewarding career.

Mkami’s entrepreneurial journey also showcases the transformative power of small businesses in driving economic growth. Her company, Mkami T. Limited (Mkami Products), has rapidly become a dynamic force in the food processing industry. Specializing in a diverse range of spices, including tea masala, pilau masala, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, black pepper, garlic, and lemongrass tea, Mkami Products exemplifies the potential of entrepreneurship to uplift communities and foster development.

From Vision to Reality: Building Mkami T. Limited

Tetere's entrepreneurial journey began with a clear vision: to produce premium spices that tantalize taste buds while creating meaningful economic opportunities for her community. Since its inception in 2020 and official registration in 2022, Mkami Products has flourished, now employing two individuals directly and 13 others temporarily during peak seasons, contributing significantly to local livelihoods.

Global Recognition and Industry Engagement

Mkami Products' unwavering commitment to quality and innovation has earned international recognition, positioning the company as a leader in the food processing industry. Mkami Products was honored with an invitation to the prestigious World Food Congress in Italy, where they showcased their distinctive spice blends and connected with industry leaders worldwide. "The World Food Congress was a pivotal experience for us," Tetere shared. "We had the privilege of networking with key stakeholders, learning about cutting-edge processing techniques, and exploring new markets for our products." She also acknowledges the crucial support from the Ministry of Agriculture in expanding their understanding of the global spice market.

Uncompromising Quality and Sustainable Practices

An uncompromising commitment to quality and sustainability is at the heart of Mkami Products' success. The company sources its spices from local farmers, ensuring freshness while supporting the local agricultural community. These spices are processed using traditional and modern techniques to preserve authenticity and safety. Among their standout products, pilau masala is celebrated for its unique blend that enhances flavour without causing digestive discomfort. Their ginger, known for its pungent aroma, is highly sought after and features prominently in various culinary creations. These unique selling points have solidified Mkami Products' reputation as a competitive force in the food processing industry.

Commitment to the Spice Value Chain

Mkami T. Limited sets itself apart through its comprehensive engagement with the entire spice value chain. The company consistently collaborates with farmers, offering training and support through exemplary practices to ensure high-quality produce and sustainable agricultural methods.

Spicing Up the Future

"As Mkami T. Limited continues to grow and innovate, it remains committed to delivering exceptional spices and supporting local agricultural communities," she says. In essence, Mkami T. Limited's journey is about the transformative power of entrepreneurship, demonstrating how even small businesses can significantly impact local economies and communities. With a clear vision, innovative practices, and a commitment to quality and sustainability, Mkami Products is not only spicing up Tanzanian cuisine but also making its mark on the global culinary landscape.

Benefiting from Advancing Youth Activity

Mkami credits part of her success to the Advancing Youth Activity, funded by Feed the Future and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The program enhanced her business acumen and leadership skills, equipping her with the tools to scale her business and

maximize its impact.

The Role of SAGCOT

Mkami acknowledges the support and opportunities SAGCOT provided, enabling her to connect with other farmers and institutions and access valuable resources. “SAGCOT has been instrumental in helping me network with other farmers and access the knowledge I need to succeed. I’m excited about the future and what I can achieve with the right support,” she concludes. Tetere's story is one of perseverance, determination, and inspiration. From her early days as a labourer to her current success as a businesswoman, she is a role model within her community. Her accomplishments have earned her respect and recognition, including her role as a founding director of '5 Star Trainers Group,' a consultancy firm dedicated to empowering rural women and youth.

Published 24 October 2024 · Youth Innovations

Source: <https://agcot.org/2024/10/24/rising-agripreneur-mkami-tetere-leading-tanzanias-agricultural-future-with-a-passion-for-spices/> · AGCOT Centre, Dar es Salaam