

## NEWS & FEATURES

# How AMAGRO is Sweetening the Deal for Mango Farmers - Hamadi Mkopi

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"Our vision is to see Tanzanian mangoes on shelves across Tanzania, Africa, and the globe. We're working hard to overcome the challenges and unlock the true potential of the Tanzanian mango industry as a leading cash crop," says Hamadi Mkopi, a co-founder and Executive Secretary of AMAGRO.

Mkopi discusses the origins and evolution of the association. Meanwhile, SAGCOT CEO Geoffrey Kirenga highlights the significant growth potential of Tanzania's mango industry in the expanding global market. Additionally, Prof. Andrew E. Temu emphasizes the critical role of finance and non-bank financial institutions in supporting the sector's development.

**History and Evolution:** "Originally founded as a Mango Club, AMAGRO transformed into a full-fledged association to provide structured support to its members", Mkopi, says. Initially focused on the coastal regions and Dar es Salaam, with members managing over 4,000 hectares, AMAGRO faced challenges due to rapid urban expansion threatening their operations. This led to a strategic relocation of mango farms to regions like Songea, Tabora, Dodoma, and Tanga, thus preserving their mission amid changing agricultural landscapes.

**Membership:** AMAGRO has witnessed a significant decline in its membership, currently standing at around 150 active members, a stark contrast to its former roster of over a thousand. To counteract this downward trend, AMAGRO is focusing on increased profitability and potential for growth within the mango farming sector. There is a new awakening, with growing interest among the youth in the mango sector, Mkopi, notes.

**Mango Varieties and Markets:** Members of AMAGRO grow various mango varieties such as Appelmango, Kesar (Boribo Muyuni), Keitt, Kent, Zill, Alphonso, Koga, and Tommy Atkins, catering to both local and international markets, notably in the SADC region and the Middle East. This diversity has enabled them to penetrate significant markets, bolstering Tanzania's agricultural exports successfully.

**Initiatives and Achievements:** AMAGRO members have initiated several projects, including educational outreach, nursery development, and land acquisition for new farms. There are several model farms where new entrants can learn. These initiatives have enhanced knowledge transfer among farmers and established sustainable agricultural practices. The association is recognized for contributing to agricultural development and enhancing sustainability.

**Current Challenges and Strategic Adaptations:** AMAGRO adeptly navigated various challenges by establishing strategic partnerships with key organizations. In December 2023 and January 2024, Agribusiness East Africa, in collaboration with the Association of Mango

Growers in Tanzania (AMAGRO), COPRA, TOSCI, SAGCOT, TAHA, Diligent Consulting Limited, and Nature Ripe, presented a critical forum focused on addressing challenges facing mango cultivation, including pests and various diseases that impact these crops. These alliances have facilitated strategies to ensure the sector's adaptability, continued growth, and resilience.

### **The Huge Potential of Mango Farming as a Cash Crop:**

Mango farming in Tanzania holds substantial potential as a lucrative cash crop, comparable to coffee in terms of profitability. The mango industry in Tanzania, while still developing, offers significant advantages due to its potential for both domestic consumption and international export. Mango farming is more adaptable and has a growing market demand, especially in the off-season for major producers like India and Pakistan.

### **Challenges and Strategies:**

Despite their successes, AMAGRO members face challenges like fruit flies, stringent international quality standards, and the absence of critical infrastructure like pack houses. Addressing these challenges head-on, AMAGRO has laid out strategic interventions, including the construction of a pack house to facilitate the export of mangoes, developing a national mango industry strategy, and expanding extension services to help farmers meet international certification standards.

**Education and Extension Services:** Education remains a cornerstone of AMAGRO's strategy. The association not only educates its members on best farming practices but also offers extensive services through its dedicated extension officers. These professionals ensure that members adhere to the highest agricultural standards, thus boosting both yield and fruit quality.

**Promotion and Market Expansion:** AMAGRO actively promotes mango farming through campaigns and the annual Mango Tasting Festival, a popular event that connects growers with potential buyers from both local and international markets. This helps expand their market reach and educates consumers about the quality and variety of Tanzanian mangoes.

**Looking Ahead:** With plans to invest in infrastructure for processing dried mangoes and conducting feasibility studies for new market opportunities, AMAGRO is poised for significant growth. The association aims to leverage Tanzania's seasonal production advantage to fill gaps in the global market, especially during off-peak periods for northern hemisphere producers. Through resilient efforts in training, advocacy for market expansion, and strategic infrastructure development, AMAGRO is nurturing a vibrant mango economy in Tanzania.

### **Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO of SAGCOT: "Seizing Opportunities in the Expanding Global Mango Market"**

According to SAGCOT CEO Geoffrey Kirenga, Tanzania produces about 700,000 metric tons of mangoes annually. He emphasizes that with increased production, Tanzania could capture a significant share of the rapidly growing global mango market. This market has expanded from US\$63.65 billion in 2023 to US\$67.95 billion in 2024, representing a compound annual growth rate of 6.7%. This growth is largely driven by rising disposable incomes and shifting consumer preferences towards tropical fruits.

### **Prof. Andrew E. Temu, Managing Director of Diligent Consulting Ltd: "Harnessing Finance to Boost Tanzania's Mango Sector"**

Prof. Andrew E. Temu, Managing Director of Diligent Consulting Ltd, envisions a promising future for the mango sector through enhanced access to finance. Prof. Temu advocates for a value chain finance approach and emphasizes the critical role of non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) in supporting mango growers.

### **Community Impact and Environmental Sustainability:**

Beyond agricultural practices, AMAGRO is deeply committed to both community development and environmental sustainability. Both SAGCOT and AMAGRO promote mango farming as part of a broader strategy to combat climate change. Mango farming enhances the quality of life for farmers and ensures the conservation of natural resources for future generations. This commitment reflects a holistic approach to agriculture that balances productivity with environmental stewardship.

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