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## Fair, organic and sustainable: Twiga Sun Fruits produces dried pineapple in Uganda

With the aim of providing a smallholders' cooperative in the Ugandan sub-county of Kangulumira with future prospects, a fair income and a sustainable increase in prosperity, the Austrian company Twiga Sun Fruits GmbH recently launched a project for the production of solar-dried pineapple: organic, fair and meeting European quality standards. The new production facility has been in operation since June 2023. It is able to produce 8 tons of dried pineapple a year on site. The devices used to peel, core and cut the pineapple were donated by the company KRONEN GmbH from the German town of Kehl am Rhein.



Uganda is situated in central eastern Africa, directly on the equator. Its location and outstanding soil quality make Uganda predestined for high and high-quality yields of crops all year round. Uganda is also, however, one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world.

Until recently, the partners in a smallholders' cooperative in Kangulumira produced around 4,800 tons of fresh organic pineapple per year. Most of the pineapple grown was sold at the local market – with high post-harvest losses and low sales revenue. Some of the crops yielded were further processed in small tunnel dryers, but this type of processing involves many disadvantages and above all significant losses. Against this background, the production approach used by the farmers has now been transformed with the help of Twiga Sun Fruits GmbH from the Austrian town of Bludenz.

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### **Producing 8 tons of dried pineapple per year**

The technology was installed on site in the spring, and production then commenced. Since then, the production has already proven to be highly successful. The pineapple selected to be dried is cored with a grid cutter and then cut into 10 mm-thick slices using the MASS manual pineapple slicer. The devices were donated to the project by KRONEN GmbH from Kehl am Rhein. After being manually cut into segments, the fruit is gently dried at a stable temperature of 60 °C for approx. 20 hours using a cabinet dryer from the company Innotec Ingenieursgesellschaft mbH.

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With this method, 135 g of dried fruit can be produced from a fresh pineapple weighing 2 kg. Twiga Sun Fruits places value on leaving as much added value as possible in Uganda while also taking a sustainable approach. The dried fruit is therefore also packaged directly in Kangulumira in an inert gas atmosphere.

This new approach aims to produce 8 tons of dried pineapple per year, thus significantly increasing the cooperative's production volume. It processes around 120 tons of raw produce, namely solely good product, per year. The high quality standard and stable production volume enable the cooperative to establish itself in international trade. After successfully launching the new production facility, the project partners now aim to further increase the production volume to 150 tons of dried pineapple per year.

The dried fruit is imported to Austria by Twiga Sun Fruits, which sells it directly in its online shop. "We provide the solar energy and processing technology free of charge," explains Daniel Neyer, who founded Twiga Sun Fruits with Kerstin Wolf. "The cooperative only pays a low rent for using the building, which is provided by our Ugandan partner All in Trade."

**Fair, organically certified and sustainable**

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on agriculture,” states Kerstin Wolf. “Twiga Sun Fruits arose from our strong conviction that we can provide smallholders in Uganda with future prospects, a fair income and a sustainable increase in prosperity. We want to contribute towards the sustainable industrialization of the Ugandan agricultural-food sector.”

70 farmers in the cooperative have now already been granted organic certification in accordance with European standards by the Swiss certification organization Ecocert IMOSwiss AG. Twiga Sun Fruits GmbH has been proudly bearing the Verified Social Enterprise (VSE) label since June 1, 2023. This state-approved label confirms that the company meets all the criteria for a social enterprise. During the construction of the production facility, Twiga Sun Fruits is creating qualified jobs. The Twiga Sun Fruits campaign aims to double the cooperative’s current organic export sales price per kilogram of dried pineapple. It also prevents food spoilage and therefore eliminates the high losses previously suffered by the cooperative.

The heat used to dry the fruit is produced with the help of solar thermal collectors and stored in warm water tanks. A power supply is additionally generated using photovoltaics. All in all, this results in a cost-optimized and sustainable solution for ensuring an independent solar supply for the production facility. “The use of solar thermal energy to obtain process heat and the holistic approach make us pioneers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only 0.4 % of the world’s solar thermal energy applications can be found in this region. Solar thermal energy offers potential that has been virtually left untouched,” explains Neyer.

Another important component of the project was supplying both the village community and the production facility with clean drinking water. A solar water pump installed by the project partner All in Trade Ltd. now provides 1,500 residents in the village community with fresh drinking water. This was made possible by a fundraising campaign launched in cooperation with the charity managerohngrenzen (Managers without Borders).

The other investments in the project made by Twiga Sun Fruits are solely private and funded without any sponsorships. In addition to contributions made by the company founders, Kerstin Wolf and Daniel Neyer, the investments are also funded by silent partners. They are only amortized via sales of the dried fruit in Europe.



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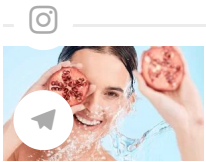
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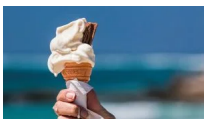
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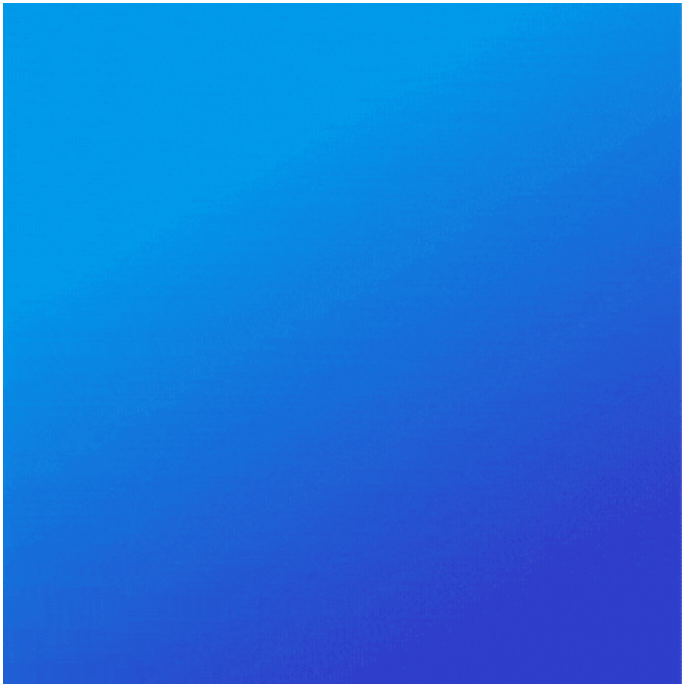
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