The Adventurous farmer:
Meet our August Member of the month; Joseph Taremwa whose love for agriculture and adventure saw him combine both to start up a successful Agro-Tourism Association in Uganda. Here are excerpts from Joseph Taremwa's Q&A.

Tell us about yourself:
My name is Ruhakana J. Taremwa and I am a youth social entrepreneur engaged in Agro-Tourism. A Mukiga by tribe, he was born in Kabale district (currently Rukiga district), and is the first born of seven, 2 boys and 5 beautiful girls. An accomplished Agribusiness Value Chain and Enterprise Development Consultant and Certified Trainer, I am the Chief Executive Officer, Agro-Tourism Association; an Association that has positively impacted over 20,000 farmers in and outside Uganda majorly youth and women. Passionate about Africa’s agribusiness growth and development, I am greatly described by my peers as a person whose integrity is not doubtable. Having studied and travelled to a number of countries around the world, I have been able to interact and share many innovative agribusiness ideas most of which are being implemented at an Agribusiness and Agro-Tourism Farm located 5km off Mukono-Kayunga Road, Mukono district. I also wear another face of activism; vehemently and publically speaking about issues that affect the growth and development of smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa; addressing issues like why smallholder farmers remain small, how they can graduate to large scale farmers.

Could you please introduce Agro-Tourism to the AgriProFocus network members in Uganda:
Tourism is the basis of economic and cultural development. It was after the mid twenties’ that it started to grow progressively, becoming one of the major sectors in the world economy. Currently, tourism does not only include game parks, historical sites, lakes and rivers, but also farming activities, agro-processing centers, agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional food and the daily life of the rural people, as well as the cultural elements and traditions - referred to as Agro-Tourism. It’s a hybrid concept that merges elements of two complex industries - Agriculture and Tourism, to open up new profitable markets for farm products and services and provides travel experiences. Mathematically,
AGRO-TOURISM = AGRICULTURE + TOURISM

The potential benefits of Agro-Tourism for development are varied; first, it provides on-site family employment, generates diversification opportunities for family farms to increase revenues and enhance the viability of their farming operations. Secondly, it’s an excellent tool to educate the public about the importance of family farming and its contribution to the economy. Thirdly, it enhances demand for farm products, fosters agricultural marketing and creates value-added and direct-marketing opportunities.

Could you share the big achievements of Agro-Tourism in Uganda

When we started Agro-Tourism many agribusiness and tourism stakeholders in Uganda including government didn’t appreciate that Agro-Tourism can be a great revenue stream and possibly contribute eminently to Uganda’s development. But am very pleased to announce that farmers are happily earning from this cash crop of Agro-Tourism, other than gorillas, lakes, rivers, and national park, Uganda Tourism Board and tourism companies now boast of other tourism products, and various employment opportunities especially to the youth and women have been created. Many youth have now developed a positive attitude towards agriculture due to the fun component involved in Agro-Tourism.

With the Agro-Tourism Association, what problem are you trying to fix in Uganda:

- Limited incomes of farmers from their agribusiness enterprises
- Limited tourism products in Uganda by tourism players
- Youth Unemployment especially amongst the youth
- Youth’s negative mindset towards agriculture

How did you come up with the idea:

Professionally am an agriculturists, and before the Agro-Tourism Association, I had done a lot of consulting work in enterprise development and agribusiness value chains. Additionally, I had trained a number of farmers along various chains in Farming as a Business. One major finding I found out was that many farmers were not earning profits from their enterprises despite heavy investments, passion and dedication to their agri-enterprises. I there after thought of what other innovative ideas I can engage with farmers to earn an extra income without extra investments and the answer was Agro-Tourism. Additionally, I hail from Kigezi region, western Uganda where tourism is a huge business, I used to see thousands of bazungu(Whites) flocking our region especially around Bwindi for especially gorilla trekking and I started thinking of how to also engage in a related business. But because my background was agriculture and I was practicing it passionately, I couldn’t abandon agriculture for tourism rather I had to merge the 2 elements of Agriculture with Tourism to come up with Agro-Tourism.

How difficult is it to be a successful entrepreneur in Uganda:

Despite that there are many conditions that favor entrepreneurial growth in Uganda, they face many difficulties. Notably is financial access. Many entrepreneurs especially the youth find great difficulty to access business finance from formal financial institutions due to high interest rates levied and collaterals required which many upcoming entrepreneurs especially
the youth don’t possess. The over 20% interest rates charged by Commercial banks in Uganda is among the highest in the world, many entrepreneurs are therefore left on the mercy of less formal financial players such as money lenders whose lending services have been marred with a lot of hooliganism. Competing with other entrepreneurs in the other parts of the world for example in Asia where interest rates are very minimal and at times zero becomes very challenging. Easy to access business financial support such as loan and grant from especially the government is greatly hampered and characterized by corruption (kitu kidogo) which makes genuine Ugandan entrepreneurs with integrity loose out.

**How can we support/promote Agro-Tourism Association:**

Promoting, sensitization and awareness creation about Agro-Tourism as a cash crop amongst AgriProFocus members is one way Agro-Tourism Association can be supported. Capacity building of Agro-Tourism Association staff, members and other tourism players is important for us since it will enable the activities of the association move on smoothly. We are developing a project proposal with 3 major components of; 1. Agro-Tourism Awareness Creation (where shall bring on board a number of tourism players on board such as farmers at various chains, policy makers, inline ministries such as Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and Ministry of Wildlife and Antiquities), academic institutions, hoteliers, among others. 2. Countrywide Mapping of Agro-Tourism Sites, and 3. Agro-Tourism Project Implementation around the country. Agro-Tourism Association can therefore be supported in ensuring that the above project proposals attain both technical and financial support.

Agro-Tourism Association is engaged in 4 Major areas;
- Agro-Tourism development. This aims at promoting agribusiness enterprises as tourism attraction centers
- Agribusiness Incubation.

We work with many youth with innovative ideas but rather with less technical and financial capacities. We provide them with technical support, production space, BDS’s such as marketing, record keeping, business planning, business plan development, networking among others, and provide or link them to mentors who guide them upto the point when they are able to independently run their businesses.
On the 2nd right is state Minster of Agriculture, Hon Christopher M.T Kibanzanga at one of his recent tour to our agribusiness incubation unit in Mukono. Seen above he is in the Mulondo juice production incubation unit.

- Training & Demonstration. We conduct various trainings along different agribusiness value chains including BDS’s. All our trainings are aimed at enabling and ensuring that farmers engage in Farming as a Business.
- Internship program. Due to the continuous channeling of youth from formal institutions with limited hands-on skills, we introduced a practical internship program where we provide internship opportunities to various youth and students from both formal and informal institutions in and outside Uganda. For our students to graduate our measure/test is very simple, he or she must have a product/service or any business to showcase.

Above are some of the intern students (From Makerere University, Princeton)
What can you say about AgriProFocus Uganda:
AgriProFocus Uganda has greatly expanded on farmers’ networks and this has resulted into increased incomes of farmers since most of them are able to engage in farming as a business. The exposure visits and networking sessions that are always organized by AgriProFocus has impacted on people’s mindset towards agribusiness. “Mr Rukakana, can you imagine, I didn’t know one can earn from keeping bees, some people are quietly minting cash from villages as opposed to some of us in Kampala. We have a huge forest back home after this caravan I want to go and start off immediately” Said a youth during the caravan week that was organized by AgriProFocus Uganda in 2017.

How would you describe your success so far:
My success has been characterized by hard work, patience, and integrity. There is no shortcut to success, I have been able to promote and market Uganda as an agro-tourism destination based on the 3 factors. Notably is that the success I have attained isn’t mine alone but rather for the whole team, farmers and other stakeholders i work with.

Any closing remarks:
Firstly, I would like to request and encourage all agribusiness players including farmers, private sector, development partners, CSO’s, media, government, policy makers to integrate Agro-Tourism in their programs because it’s a model I have tested and has a great impact in terms of employment, farmer income generation, conservation, practical agribusiness education, among others,
Secondly, I would like to appreciate our development partners, business partners, academia institutions, CSO’s, and principality AgriProFocus for supporting baby Agro-Tourism to grow, thanks so much!

Agro-Tourism Association has organized an agribusiness tour to Nairobi International Trade Fair, the biggest agribusiness expo in East and central Africa. The event will take place from 1st-7th October, 2018. So please book your space now. The tour full board fees is just 190 dollars including transport, accommodation, meals, training costs, training materials, etc. You can also support someone to attend. For more information contact 0772062903 or 0700161942 or joseph.taremwa@gmail.com