

## Face to Face at World Cashew Convention 2017

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**Mr. Peter L Masawe, Head of Research, Regional Coordinator, NM-AIST, Tanzania**

*An Exclusive Interview with Mr. Peter L Masawe, Head of Research, Regional Coordinator, NM-AIST, Tanzania  
at the World Cashew Convention, 09-11 Feb, 2017, Singapore*

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**How was the season so far in Tanzania, what was the farm gate price offered to the farmers and your message for WCC?**

The season in Tanzania was very exciting; there was a very stiff competition among the buyers, for the first time in the history of cashew trade in Tanzania we had many buyers from various countries i.e., Vietnam, India and other places. The prices started on a very high note and they continued to remain high throughout the season. Farmers felt cashew is a cash crop as they have made high profits and thus has helped to rescue their life from poverty. Indeed, the prices were extraordinarily high; I wonder how processors were making profit. On the other hand, let's be happy that farmers were encouraged. The government has also introduced various systems for the movement of cashew nuts from the farms to the warehouses and this has led to increase in production records. Tanzania this year (2016/17) has recorded around 255,000 metric tonnes of cashews.

**With ever increasing demand for RCN, do you think there is scope for Tanzania, to increase its area under cashew cultivation and what are the initiatives taken to improve the area as well as production?**

Increasing area under production is one thing, increasing production and productivity is another thing. The best approach so far is increasing productivity before increasing area under production. Most of the cashews from Tanzania are from the southern regions that account almost up to 80% of overall production. But, if we concentrate more on all the other growing areas in Tanzania, to utilise maximum out of the area, which is already planted, rehabilitate the existing bushes, before we move into non-traditional cashew growing areas are some of the initiatives that has to be taken.

**You work in an educational institution, where in you promote new ideas like inter cropping, mulching etc. How are farmers reacting to the new changes which are brought in?**

As a cashew breeder in a research institute, am happy to inform you that Tanzania has released a total of 54 varieties in cashew nut, 16 cashew clones and two cashew hybrids, which are conventional registered. In terms of contributions of research institutions, we are striving to ensure that the farmers are getting these new varieties which can yield up to 100 kilograms/ tree at the age of 10 years. More importantly, we are training our farmers towards good agronomic practices, as incidence of pest and diseases can lead to a crop loss of more than 70%, hence choosing the right pesticide and its application on the trees in the optimum period can tremendously increase the crop size in Tanzania. Intercropping and mixed cropping plays a substantial role for big farmers, as intercropping in cashews right now is not a choice, but mandatory for new plantations. This operation not only increases the overall income of farmer, but also will cut short the operational cost.

**How well is awareness on utilisation potential of cashew apples, CNSL, and other by products of cashew in Tanzania?**

Although Tanzania is the biggest cashew producer in East Africa, still its lowest in terms of value addition, and one of the main reasons why we are not processing in Tanzania is because of high price of RCN. Moreover, farmers feel trading in RCN is more profitable. This is an area where the government has to think twice before taking a decision as to improve our processors to able compete in the world market. Utilization of cashew apple and other by products is very low. At the research station level, we have developed a protocol for cashew apple production and are readying up for scaling but CNSL and other by products are not very well exploited yet in Tanzania. This might one of the other reason as to why processors in Tanzania are not yet making high profits and are not competitive in the international markets.

**What are the hindrances faced by the Tanzanian exporters?**

Over the years, the percentage of cashew processing is decreasing drastically in Tanzania, mainly due to high price of RCN. Most of the processors are exporters and are more inclined towards exporting RCN than Processing. If you are exporting, you receive the returns within 10-15 days but if we are processing then you may have to wait for 250-300 days. In this regard the government has to take certain initiatives to improve processing in Tanzania

**What are the initiatives taken by the government of Tanzania, for the betterment of the whole cashew industry?**

Current Government of Tanzania is very interested in value addition of cashews. The President has declared that the country to be converted into an industrialised hub and cashew has a huge potential. So am very confident that the government will support the processors. On behalf of Tanzanian government, I invite processors who are interested in setting up Cashew factories in Tanzania. Government has a budget to construct three cashew processing factories in different parts of the country. For, all those we are looking for partners and we are inviting investors to come and invest in Tanzania

**Please tell us about the port conjunctions and the issue of usage of Mtwara port or Dar es Salaam port in Tanzania?**

Cashew is a crop, which is influenced by local and international politics. The government was making sure that the cashews are exported through Mtwara, as it is very easy to control cheating and we are very sure this problem will be resolved very soon. Mtwara will be able to handle huge volumes. Moreover, we have now taken strict measures to see that even if the trade occurs in Dar es Salaam or Tanga ports, there are strict measures to see to that the cashews are sold only through warehouse systems