

FEATURE STORY RELEASE



Cane farmer looks to modernisation for a better future

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LICE MOVONO

In the fields of Nubu in Macuata cane farmer Madan Sen is focused on the future for both his family and his farms. Madan sees abounding potential for modernisation and expansion to make his cane farming business interesting and viable for his youngest son.

While the industry has an aging population and challenging conditions, there are farmers like Madan who remain confident that the industry will provide a sweet answer to a better future. The father of five owns and operates five farms, totaling 42 acres of sugar cane land. The five farms are spread between two different districts in Nubu and Bulileka.

Nubu, home to the mythical floating island, is one of the last districts of Macuata on the way up towards Udu Point before the highway takes you through the mountains across to the top part of Natewa Bay and the province of Cakaudrove. It is a beautiful location to operate a commercial farm, and Madan's family has lived in the area for 40 years.

While bright city lights and white-collar jobs are attracting the younger generation, farmers like Madan have to be smart to ensure the farms they have nurtured are passed on to someone who will continue the good work.

"I have 5 kids and they are all working. The eldest is a police officer, one is a nurse, one is a secondary school teacher and another one has migrated to the United States of America. The last one is here working with me," he said. The youngest, now 22 years old, joined Madan straight out of sixth form several years ago. Madan made sure he was properly motivated to make sugar cane farming his career choice.

"Sugar cane farming is not very hard, it's easy. I'm my own boss, I can do what I want to do and rest when I want to. Through my farm I was able to ensure my children were educated, and they are now in good positions. Nowadays, plenty of people now like to live in town because they don't want hard jobs and they think that sugar cane farming is hard."

With an acute awareness that young people want a modern lifestyle and have a different value set, Madan talked to his son to find out what would make him stay. Together, they devised the

plan and created a challenge to modernise and expand the farm. They are now united towards fulfilling their plan.

2018 was a good year for Madan and in turn he was able to expand and lease a few more blocks of land to further increase his harvest.

"During the last season, I managed to harvest more than 800 tonnes, the previous year was about 600 and the year before that was also 600 tonnes. Last year I bought three farms here and I planted more sugar cane. By next year I should harvest 2000 tonnes," he said.

He continued, "I want to make this harvest and the extra cash because this way my son can buy anything he wants or can make another business, but he has to do the farming. I will work hard to get him that money because I pulled him back to stay in sugar cane farming."

All of the extra profit from the past few seasons has been directly invested back into the farm, helping increase and improve farming implements, including the purchase of tractors and an automatic harvester.

"Nowadays it's very hard to get young people to stay. My advice to other older farmers is you have to understand your children better. You must talk to your children and make farming attractive."

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Captions:

- 1. Madan Sen, of Nubu in Macuata is working hard to ensure he lives his son with a farm he can be proud of. Picture: LICE MOVONO*
- 2. Madan Sen with labourers from the village in the Nubu district outside Labasa. Picture: LICE MOVONO*
- 3. The lush surrounds of Nubu, Macuata. Picture: LICE MOVONO*

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