

Rwanda soils suitable for Korean vegetables – survey

By: Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti **Published:** August 12, 2015 The New Times



Dr Yu (R) with his students on the farm in Musanze where Korean cabbage are being experimented. (Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti)

A Korean agricultural expert who lectures at the University of Rwanda's College of Agriculture, Animal Sciences and Veterinary Medicine has urged farmers to engage in growing Korean vegetables. Dr Ki Yull Yu said he conducted a study which indicated that Rwandan soils are conducive for Korean vegetables.

He carried out the study on five Korean vegetable varieties together with his students in the Crop Science Department.

The two-year research was conducted on Korean cabbage, radish, spinach, leaf mustard and lettuce, according to Dr Yu.

“The research was conducted at the UR-CAVM field farm from January 2013 to June 2015. The seeds used for the experiment were brought from Korea. The cultivation methods were the same as those employed by Rwandan farmers. Pesticides, artificial fertilisers and irrigation were not used during the experimentation,” said Yu.

He said the crops were highly adaptable to the local climate and soil type.

“Growing them is simple, they are environmentally-friendly and do not require the special technology. To increase yields, farmyard manure is required, depending on

the soil's fertility," he added.

Yu stressed production is higher in Rwanda than when the crops are grown in Korea, hence encouraging farmers and local leaders to engage in growing the vegetables.

"In terms of yields, Korean radish in Korea is 73 tonnes per hectare, while in Rwanda it can be between 85 tonnes and 100 tonnes per hectare. Korean cabbage in Korea is between 92 tonnes and 98 tonnes per hectare, but in Rwanda it can be between 100 hectares and 130 tonnes per hectare.

"In the case of Korean spinach, the harvesting in Korea is done once per season. However, it can be harvested more than twice in Rwanda because it continues due to suitable climatic conditions," Yu explained.



Students survey a Korean leaf mustard garden in Musanze. (Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti)

Farmers who have no special technology can produce these exotic vegetables easily and safely, Yu added.

"Introducing these exotic vegetables to Rwanda will contribute to food security and increase farmers' income," he noted.

Research on growing Korean vegetables in Rwanda was also conducted by some students while working on their dissertations.

Aime Thierry Nteziryayo, who completed his studies in crop science, said the research was paramount and showed that Korean vegetables could be productive once cultivated on Rwandan soil.

“I conducted the study on the growth of Korean vegetable, specifically on cabbage, and given the production per hectare, the Korean variety yielded over 100 tonnes, the Rwanda cabbage was about 70 tonnes,” he said.

Camille Hodari, the Musanze District agronomist, said research on vegetables and other crops are of great importance and helps farmers and local leaders work on ways to improve productivity and livelihoods.

He said they will work with the researchers on the possibility of growing the vegetable varieties in the area.

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