

Forty-five per cent of global food goes to waste

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Almost half of the world's fruit crops grown on pasture never reach their consumers, but instead go to waste as they rot or are thrown away.

According to a Save Food report, 45 per cent of the fruits and vegetables produced worldwide end up not in stomachs of the hungry, but wasted. The report paints a gloomy picture of the Kenyan mango consumption, with approximately 64 per cent of all mangoes harvested in the country going to waste.

Currently, some 93 per cent of all mangoes harvested locally are sold in the market place as fresh fruits, while only seven per cent are either exported or processed to other products.

"Some of the reasons for these low export volumes are the poor handling methods of the harvest, high transaction costs of the product from farms to the final business man, and mostly domination of local mango varieties which are cheaper for people to buy," says the report.

It is in the light of this report that Kenya's players in the food processing and packaging industry have been challenged to come up with more internationally competitive products whose value can effectively meet needs of customers both locally and abroad.

"For international consumers and other buyers to purchase our products, they are guided by the presentation of these products mostly through their packaging, which is a pointer to their quality," observed Industrialisation and Enterprise Development principal secretary Wilson Songa when he launched the Food Processing and Packaging Exposyuum (FPPE).

The packaging industry could be one of the answers that Kenya's food is waiting for and it is estimated to be valued at billions of shillings.

As international demand for new products continues to soar, accelerating levels of thirst are demanding fresh fruits and juices to quench thirst. "People have become more health conscious, and the changing lifestyles are over bearing on convenience, as they crave a quick, easy snack at pocket-friendly prices," reveals the report.

For fruit marketers, options such as packaging juices or drying the fruit to enable storage for longer durations are some of the options that can help lessen the losses being experienced in the fruit market.

Bharat Shah, vice chairman of Ken Afric industries said the rising middle class in Kenya and the discovery of significant oil and gas deposits, as well as increasing levels of urban population at 40 per cent urbanisation rates are some of the reasons that businesses cannot ignore Kenya as an investment destination.

The report recommends the development of capacities along the supply chain and the targeted use of technology as well as an increase in training opportunities for growers, the establishment of local warehouses and distribution centres, and raising awareness regarding efficiency and sustainability improvements in general.

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