Cashew for cash, food and climate change mitigation

What is cashew?

Cashew (Anacardium occidentale) is a large tree belonging to the same family as mango. It got its name Anacardium because of its heart like shape. The actual nut is attached to the lower end of the fruit (the cashew apple). It originated from South America, but is now widespread in tropical countries including Uganda.

What are cashew nuts?

Cashew nuts are unusual nuts. They are seeds that is grown on the outside of the cashew apples. The nut hangs from the true fruit, a large fleshy but sour apple-like fruit, which is very rich in vitamin C. The cashew shell contains a natural chemical acid so cashews are never sold in shells. The kernel inside is packed with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytochemicals beneficial to health. Cashew nuts are rich in protein, niacin, iron, zinc, fat, saturated and mono-unsaturated)

What are the uses and benefits of cashews?

- Used in Confectionery and as desert
- The kernels yield edible oil
- Fleshy swollen cashew apple is juicy, astringent and edible
- Juice from the apple is fermented and made into wine, and pulp is used for preserves
- Shells or pericarp yield cashew shell-oil which is used in manufacture of varnishes, typewriter rolls, industrial flooring tiles, gums, inks, oil cloth, pains, water-proofing paper, acid and alkali resistant cements, laminating resins and rubber compounding resins
- Oil from shells is used for treating cracks on soles of feet and also used for producing synthetic cation-exchange resin for use in treatment of water required for boilers, air-conditioning units, ice plants, textile industries, etc.
- Leaves yield tan
- Sap from bark is made into indelible ink.
- Cashew nut shell liquid is used commercially as phenolic raw material for manufacture of certain resins and plastics
- It is used as friction modifier in manufacture of brake linings, industrial belting and clutches
- Also used in laminating or impregnating materials where oil or acid resistance is required.
- Other uses include manufacture of lacquers, electrical insulation material, anti-corrosive for metals, waterproofing and adhesives, shell oil is drying oil, rich source of phenol.
- High utility value of oil for industrial purposes is chiefly due to the fact that it polymerizes to rubber like substance under influence of acids and also forms wide range of condensation products with aldehydes.



How is the cashew tree important for climate change?

The cashew tree is a tropical ever green plant

Absorbs Carbondioxide *Excretes Oxygen*



What are the growth conditions for cashew?

A minimum of 50 cm rainfall per annum is necessary. Soils which are not heavy, and which have reasonably good drainage are suitable. Cashew is essentially a tropical crop. It does well in elevations up to 700m. It performs well at temperature between 27oC – 40oC. It is a sun-loving tree; hence it does not tolerate excessive shade.

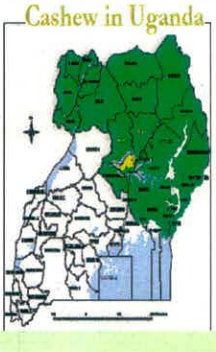
Planting, Training and Pruning

Seedlings should be planted in pits 30 cm – 45 cm deep at a spacing of 8 – 13m depending on the conditions

Does Cashew grow in Uganda?

In Uganda, large scale cashew production began with the implementation of a Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) project that aimed at creating an export industry in Uganda based on the growing of cashew nut. From 1972 to 1978, farmers were given seedlings and taught how to grow and care for the trees.

Therefore Uganda has a cashew cultivation history of about 50 years and there is an estimated 100,000 old and productive cashew trees in the country most of which are located in eastern and northern regions of the country. Most trees are scattered and the estimated area under cashew is therefore unknown. In addition to on-farm plantings, there are many cashew trees growing around school compounds and along roadsides.



Best options for scaling up cashew

Improve existing skills in crop husbandry, processing
Improve and promote efficient harvesting, processing and packaging of cashew nuts.
Developing a private-sector led approach towards the promotion of the industry.

Conclusion

Cashew is a tree crop with significant potential for providing farmers with steady income, food security and alleviating poverty while conserving the natural resource base. Growing cashew trees thus presents a strategic alternative to smallholder farmers and reduces the risk of overdependence on subsistence farming which is heavily dependent on growing of traditional crops.

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