Questionnaire for Jinja Pineapple Farmers' Cooperative (JPFC)

Section 1: General Information about the Cooperative

1. What is the name of the cooperative, and when was it established?
The cooperative is called Jinja Pineapple Farmers' Cooperative Society Limited. This initiative was started in 2022.

2. How many farmers are currently members of the cooperative?
Currently we have 802 registered farmer members.

3. What is the demographic profile of the cooperative members (e.g., age, gender, education level, years of farming experience)?
The cooperative is non-partisan, non-religious denominational and non-gender discriminative. Membership is free for all pineapple farmers from the age of 18 years.

4. What is the total land area currently under pineapple cultivation by the cooperative members?
Total land use under pineapple is 2464 acres

5. What is the legal structure of the cooperative (e.g., registered cooperative, informal group, etc.)?
The cooperative is still an informal group in the process of formal registration by Uganda registration services bureau

6. What is the governance structure of the cooperative (e.g., board of directors, decision-making processes, roles and responsibilities)?
The farmers are organized in groups of about 40 farmers each, the groups are put in zones of 10 groups each. At the top there is a board of directors directed elected from delegates from the zones.

7. What are the cooperative's current vision, mission, and objectives (if any)?
Vision: a future where agriculture goes beyond food production to a sustainable, zero waste industry that empowers transformation.
Mission: To revolutionize small holder farming in Uganda by implementing suitable, zero waste agricultural practices that increase profitability, protect the environment and uplift local communities.
Objectives:

- Promote Zero-Waste farming
- Provide training and infrastructure support for small holder farmers to expand their businesses through value addition.
- Create employment opportunities within rural communities
- Reduce agricultural waste through innovative processing methods.

8. What certifications (e.g., organic, fair trade) does the cooperative currently hold, if any?
We have Fairtrade Organic certification in mind.

Section 2: Land Usage and Acquisition

1. What is the current land ownership structure among cooperative members (e.g., individually owned, leased, communal)?
80% of the land is individually owned and the rest is leased by the farmers.

2. What is the average size of land per farmer dedicated to pineapple farming?
On average 3 acres is used per farmers for pineapple farming

3. Are there opportunities to acquire additional land for expansion? If yes, what are the potential sources (e.g., government, private landowners, and communal land)?
Yes there are opportunities to acquire additional land mainly from private land owners.

4. What are the current land tenure arrangements (e.g., freehold, leasehold, customary)?
Freehold and lease hold

5. Are there any legal or regulatory constraints on land acquisition or usage in the Jinja region?
Yes. Some parts are strictly reserved for industries.

6. What is the soil quality and topography of the current land under cultivation? Have soil tests been conducted?
Most of the soil tested has been found suitable for agriculture and plant growth.

7. Are there any environmental or zoning restrictions affecting land use in the region?
Yes. There are some wetlands that are strictly preserved and some other parts reserved for effluent deposition and treatment.

8. What is the current irrigation infrastructure, if any, and what are the water sources (e.g., rivers, boreholes, rainwater harvesting)?
The current irrigation sources are rivers, streams and swallow wells.

Section 3: Crop Cycles, Yields, and Farming Practices

1. What pineapple varieties are currently cultivated by the cooperative, and why were these varieties chosen?
The commonest variety growers are Smooth Cayenne, Red Spanish and Queen. Cayenne is the most resistant to the climate around here and also pest resistant. The other two varieties are also relatively resistant and produce sweeter pineapples though smaller in size.

2. What is the average crop cycle duration for pineapples (from planting to harvest)?
A young planted plant take 2-3 years to produce fruit.

3. What is the current yield per acre/hectare, and how does it vary across farms?
The current yield is between 20,000 and 25,000 fruits per acre depending on the care especially manure application.

4. What are the key factors affecting yields (e.g., soil fertility, pests, diseases, weather)?
There are quite a number of factors categorized into environmental factors (prolonged droughts and exhausted soils), farm related factors (pests and diseases, low manure input, competition from weeds and over use of herbicides). Other factors are lack of farmer experience and poor post-harvest handling.

5. What organic farming practices are currently in use (e.g., composting, crop rotation, natural pest control)?
We are currently concentrating on vermicomposting and integrated pest management.

6. Are there any challenges in maintaining organic certification or adhering to organic standards?
In the long run adhering organic standards is costly and requires a lot of financial input, time and technical know-how.

7. What is the current planting and harvesting schedule, and is it staggered to ensure year-round production?
The current planting and harvesting schedule is staggered.

8. What pest and disease management practices are in place, and are they compliant with organic standards?
We are into making of natural pesticide but working more on soil nutrition to ensure that the plants are resistant to diseases.

9. What is the current labor availability for farming activities, and what are the labor costs?
Most of the labor available is the casual labor. Technical labor is mainly extension workers from the district authorities.

Section 4: Organic and Sustainable Principles

1. What specific organic and sustainable principles does the cooperative follow, and how are they implemented?
We have some of the following organic and sustainable principles

- zero use of inorganic herbicides
- no use of inorganic foliar fertilizers

Implementation has been achieved as most of the farmers have started composting and making local organic herbicides.

2. Are there any training programs or extension services available to farmers on organic and sustainable farming practices?
We have started internal training on organic practices but not yet received any extension services on the same

3. What renewable energy sources, if any, are used in farming or processing operations (e.g., solar, biogas)?
Currently we are only relying on solar as the renewable energy source.

4. How is water managed sustainably on the farms (e.g., drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting)?
Water is managed on the farms by harvesting rain water and digging of water holding dams.

5. What measures are in place to prevent soil degradation and promote soil health (e.g., cover cropping, mulching)?
We are doing the following

- Inter cover cropping
- Mulching
- Terracing

6. Are there any biodiversity conservation practices in place (e.g., intercropping, agroforestry)?
Intercropping is the main biodiversity conservation practice currently.

7. What are the cooperative's current carbon footprint and environmental impact, if known?
N/A

Section 5: Waste Management (Reduce, Recycle, Repurpose)

1. What types of waste and byproducts are generated from pineapple farming and processing (e.g., pineapple crowns, peels, cores, leaves)?
Pineapple crowns, peels, cores, leaves, waste water

2. What is the current volume of waste generated annually, and how is it managed (e.g., disposal, composting)?
It's a large volume that is being composited into manure.

3. Are there any existing initiatives to reduce, recycle, or repurpose waste? If yes, please describe.
Not yet

4. What opportunities exist to repurpose pineapple waste (e.g., animal feed, compost, biogas, handicrafts)?
The opportunity is mainly as a raw material for compost manure

5. Are there local or regional partners (e.g., waste management companies, research institutions) that could assist with waste management initiatives?
There are partners but not yet on board.

6. What are the costs associated with current waste management practices, and what funding is available for waste management innovations?
N/A

Section 6: Quality of Produce
1. What quality standards are currently applied to the pineapples (e.g., size, sweetness, ripeness)?
The quality standards followed are size, and readiness (ripeness)

2. How is the quality of pineapples assessed at the farm level and during processing?
The quality is assess mainly through experience on basically two factors; the size and the ripeness.

3. Are there any challenges in maintaining consistent quality across farms?
Yes there are challenges. Some buyers are not necessarily interested in top quality pineapples. This compromises the farmers who are in need of money and rush to make a sell.

4. What post-harvest handling practices are in place to preserve quality (e.g., washing, sorting, grading)?
We have a team that is in charge of sorting and grading at the time of making a sale.

5. Are there any customer complaints or feedback regarding the quality of the pineapples?
Yes, occasionally some customers complain that what was sold to them was not ready.

6. What certifications or quality standards are required for local and international markets (e.g., GlobalGAP, EU organic standards)?
Fairtrade organic certification

Section 7: Storage and Processing
1. What storage facilities are currently available for harvested pineapples (e.g., cold storage, warehouses)?
We currently don't store harvested pineapples. We harvest and sell on order.

2. What is the current storage capacity, and is it sufficient to meet demand?
N/A

3. What are the current post-harvest losses, and what are the main causes?
Low negotiating and bargaining power because of lack of storage of highly perishable produce.

4. Are there any processing facilities for value addition (e.g., drying, juicing, canning)? If yes, describe their capacity and operations.
There are solar drying facilities in the neighborhood that can only handle a few tonnes per week.

5. What value-added products, if any, are currently produced, and what is their market demand?
Not yet. We are planning to start producing organic pineapple juice.

6. What are the costs associated with storage and processing, and how are they financed?
N/A

7. Are there opportunities to invest in additional storage or processing infrastructure? If yes, what are the potential sources of funding?
Yes. Potential funding sources are partners including buyers and social lenders.

Section 8: Market Availability (Local and International)

1. What are the current local markets for the cooperative's pineapples (e.g., supermarkets, wholesalers, retailers, direct consumers)?
The current local market is of wholesalers and retailers

2. What is the current demand for organic pineapples in the local market, and how is pricing determined?
High end Supermarkets and hotels demand organic pineapples but they are not willing to foot the corresponding prices.

3. What are the main challenges in accessing local markets (e.g., transportation, competition, pricing)?
Transport to local markets is still a challenge.

4. What international markets, if any, are currently targeted, and what is the demand for organic pineapples in those markets?
N/A

5. What are the main barriers to exporting pineapples (e.g., logistics, certifications, tariffs, quality standards)?
Certification requirements and export license are still a challenge.

6. What transportation and logistics infrastructure is currently used to move pineapples to local and international markets?
Off takers/Buyers get the pineapples direct from the farms n the villages.

7. Are there any existing partnerships with buyers, exporters, or distributors? If yes, please describe.
N/A

8. What marketing and branding strategies are currently in place to promote the cooperative's pineapples?
The strategy is Fair trade organic standards compliance.

Section 9: Financing Operations and Expansion

1. What are the cooperative's current sources of funding (e.g., member contributions, loans, grants, government support)?
We are currently relying on members' contributions only.

2. What is the annual revenue and expenditure of the cooperative, and how is financial management handled?
As a co-operative, the current income/expenditure budget is about USD 10,000 mainly into vermicomposting and member trainings. The finances are handled by the management team and board.

3. Are there any existing loans or debts, and what are the repayment terms?
No, we have no loans and or debt at the moment

4. What are the main financial challenges faced by the cooperative (e.g., cash flow, access to credit)?

- Members contribution are not enough and not timely to cater for the cooperative needs and activities
- We don't have access to credit facilities from financial institutions

5. What are the estimated costs of expanding operations (e.g., marketing, land acquisition, infrastructure, and certifications)?
Our estimated cost for the next 5 years in line with our vision and mission is about USD 500,000

6. Are there opportunities to access grants, loans, or impact investments for organic farming and sustainability initiatives?
Yes, there are some international organizations and buyers and social lenders who are willing to fund organic farming initiatives for organized farmer groups.

7. What financial institutions, government programs, or NGOs are available to support agricultural cooperatives in Uganda?
Currently we have microfinance support Centre, Agribusiness Initiative (ABi) and Uganda Development Bank (UDB)

8. Are there any plans to reinvest profits into the cooperative, and if so, how will they be allocated?
For the next five years the plan is to reinvest 0% of the profits into the cooperative activities and only 40% to be shared by members.

Section 10: Partnerships and External Support
1. What government agencies, NGOs, or research institutions currently support the cooperative, and what type of support do they provide (e.g., training, funding, market access)?
Local government / District authorities occasionally provide technical extension services.

2. Are there any existing partnerships with private sector companies (e.g., exporters, processors, retailers)?
We have an informal understanding with some retailer off takers.

3. What extension services or agricultural training programs are available to cooperative members?
The ministry of Agriculture has announced plans to extend extension services and training to farmers organized in cooperative groups.

4. Are there opportunities to collaborate with universities or research institutions on pineapple farming innovations (e.g., waste management, new varieties)?
Yes. Caritas and Kulika (both into organic farming tertiary training) have expressed interest in partnering with us for their students internship placement.

5. What role does the local community play in supporting the cooperative's activities?
The role of the community is basically membership contribution.

Section 11: Risks and Challenges

1. What are the main risks faced by the cooperative (e.g., climate change, pests, market fluctuations, funding shortages)?

The main risks are

- Climate change
- Market price fluctuations
- Inconsistencies in member participation
- Lack for funds for facilitating trainings, meetings and certification applications.

2. What risk mitigation strategies are currently in place (e.g., crop insurance, diversification)?

- Diversification including animal husbandry
- Member contribution through subscription and membership fees

3. What are the main operational challenges faced by the cooperative (e.g., labor shortages, infrastructure, logistics)?

- Logistics
- Infrastructure challenges, no operating office premises.
- Lack of skilled labor.

4. Are there any regulatory or policy challenges affecting the cooperative's operations (e.g., land use, export regulations)?

- We do not have an export license
- All the land is owned by individuals

5. What are the main social or cultural challenges, if any, in running the cooperative (e.g., gender dynamics, community resistance)?

- Most men do not allow their spouses to actively participate.
- Static mindset to farming practices.

Section 12: Vision and Aspirations

1. What is the cooperative's long-term vision for pineapple farming in Jinja, Uganda?

Producing big quantities of quality organic pineapples with as much value addition as possible for both the local and export markets.

2. What are the cooperative's goals for the next 5–10 years in terms of production, market access, and sustainability?

- An average production capacity of 20,000 pineapples per farmers per year with at least 2,000 farmer members.
- Have a pineapple solar drying station with a processing and storage capacity of 40 metric tonnes per month.
- A financial saving scheme for farmers to avail them with farming financial needs.

3. What specific support does the cooperative need to achieve its vision (e.g., technical expertise, fund envision its role in the local community and the broader agricultural sector in Uganda?

- Training farmers on co-operative principles and certification standards
- Funding the infrastructural development

- Funding for value addition equipment
- Market access.

5. What are the cooperative's aspirations for waste management and value addition?
We aspire to set up a big vermicomposting site and pineapple solar drying station.

6. How does the cooperative plan to balance local market needs with international export opportunities?
The priority is on international export opportunities, the local market could be catered for by other farmers who are not necessarily members of the co-operative.

7. What are the cooperative's aspirations for the usage of modern technology based precision farming techniques (e.g., drones, IoT sensors, etc)?
We intend to have

- Drone irrigation systems
- Mapping of farmers on a computer application.