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## Is There a Market for Moringa Products for Small-Scale Farmers?

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Lately we have received a number of letters wanting to know about marketing moringa products. In particular, several farmer groups in Uganda have written to say that they are growing a considerable number of moringa trees and now are asking us where to sell the products.

We are going to investigate this subject more thoroughly for a future article, exploring what might develop. If you have thoughts on this, or have had success marketing moringa products, we would like to hear from you.

ECHO heavily promotes the beneficial products of the moringa tree. But the reason we are so excited about moringa is that the poorest of the poor can plant a tree and eat the leaves and pods and use the powdered seeds to clarify dirty water. In some countries there are internal markets, for example for moringa pods in India.

You have read in EDN about how Church World Service and others in Senegal are using fresh leaves or dried moringa leaf powder to replace imported ingredients for treating malnourished infants or infants' mothers who can no longer produce milk. You have also read of how the leaves can be used as a major ingredient in feeding pigs. Production can increase quickly because the trees grow very readily from seed; a single moringa seed grows to a tree bearing hundreds of seed within one year.

But should a farmer's group plant moringa trees expecting that there is an international market for the seeds or leaves? In other words, they can sell coffee, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla and other products to a global market, so can they do that for moringa? With very few exceptions the answer is "no." The exception would be if there were a very innovative business already operating in your country that has somehow developed a market. A lot of businessmen are thinking about this and a few are working on it, but you should be very skeptical until you see firm commitments from a company. Even if someone offers to buy some moringa product from you, it may be for experimental markets—which might either increase or disappear the next year.

We now have an idea as to why so many farmer groups in Uganda are writing to us and asking where the markets are. Baluku Yofesi wrote, "Here in Western Uganda there has arisen a certain group of people who claim that *Moringa oleifera* has a very high commercial value and they started selling seedlings at US\$5 each but now they have come down to US\$1 per seedling."

People can sell a product for whatever a customer will pay, but it is sad if the impression was given that there is an international market for the products. If the promoters know that there is such a market, that is terrific. Ask them where to find the businessmen who will buy your product, and then sell to them. We know of one business in Tanzania that might buy the seeds, but you would need to deliver them to Tanzania and I have no idea how much you would receive nor how much the trucking would cost. And there are farmers geographically close to that particular business who can and are growing moringa seeds.

There could well be in-country markets for moringa products, especially pods (if people like them) or leaf powder for the malnourished. Perhaps if there is a famine somewhere an NGO might want to buy a quantity of leaf powder one time to meet an emergency need.

In summary, the wonderful thing about moringa is that it grows quickly and easily and even the poorest of the poor can use it, either because they like to eat it or to overcome some causes of malnutrition. As for cash crops, a good rule for farmers is to never plant a seed until you know where you are going to sell the product, and for how much money.