

**Title** Opportunities and constraints for dried dessert banana export in Uganda

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### **Abstract**

In Uganda, dessert bananas ('Apple banana', AAB group, locally known as 'Sukali Ndiizi') are being processed into dried chips for export. A local market for dried dessert banana chips is virtually non-existent. Surveys with five Ugandan exporting companies suggested that export prices of dried banana chips were good (i.e. between 6.5 and 12 USD/kg), but strongly depended on the quality and certification of the product. Major bottle necks to further expand the export seem not related to a lack of demand in Europe, but to the fact that quantities and quality of the exported produce are insufficient. Exporters indicated that one of the major constraints related to producing sufficient volumes is related to the spread of the fungal disease Fusarium wilt (*Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *cubense*), which increasingly affects 'Apple banana' production. They also indicated that other dessert bananas on the Ugandan market (e.g. 'Gros Michel' and 'Cavendish') are not processed into dried chips because the processed product is largely inferior to that of 'Apple banana' in terms of taste. This study compares drying, color and taste characteristics (texture, acidity, sugar content and color) of seven alternative Fusarium wilt resistant banana cultivars ('FHIA 01', 'FHIA 17', 'FHIA23', 'FHIA25', 'SH 3640/10', 'Yangambi', and 'Kikundi') with 'Apple banana'. European consumers rated the taste characteristics of 'FHIA 01' at least as good as 'Apple banana' and appreciated its colour more than 'Apple banana'. The taste and colour of other cultivars were generally rated inferior to 'Apple bananas' (i.e. 'FHIA 17', 'FHIA23', 'FHIA25', 'SH 3640/10', 'Yangambi', and 'Kikundi'). 'FHIA 01' and 'Apple banana' also had the highest fresh pulp dry matter content (32% and 36%, respectively) compared to other cultivars (27%) and were less sticky than other cultivars ('FHIA 17', 'FHIA23', 'FHIA25', 'SH 3640/10', 'Yangambi'), which facilitated the processing and packing of the banana chips. This study shows there is potential to further exploit the dried dessert banana export market using Fusarium wilt resistant cultivars.