WHAT THE KIKONDA NEIGHBOURS SAY
An FSC™ story from Uganda
Bananas stretch across the land, meeting neat rows of maize that yield enough for Fred Muwalamya to pay school fees for 10 children. He’s also building a brick house and plans to buy a car. “My land is good,” he says, stooping to pluck a weed from the thickly mulched soil.

Fred once planted subsistence crops in Uganda’s Kikonda Forest Reserve while his own land in the Kazo area was infested with weeds, “I knew it was illegal to plant in the forest,” he says. “But I took the risk for the sake of good soil.” He even rented land for growing, and sometimes lost crops when the owner wanted the land for grazing after a season.

It all changed in 2012 when he started working with Global-woods. “I learned that my own soil could be as fertile as the forest if I cleared the weeds, mulched and used manure,” he began planting his maize in rows with the correct spacing. Within a year, his plot was chosen as one of the best in two counties.

Global-woods also sponsored him to go a study tour to a leading banana farmer in southern Uganda. And he constantly interacts with the company’s agriculture extension officers.

Fred now gets 2.8 tons per acre of maize per season and provides about 10 seasonal jobs. Profits from his current crop will settle the global-woods loan that paid for a crib for maize storage. He has bought land from his neighbours, growing his plot to 18 acres. And he is gradually adding more livestock to diversify his farming.
A NEW WAY OF KEEPING CATTLE

Across the Hoima-Kampala road, in the village of Kiteredde, cattle keeper Godfrey Kumaana has put up fences to keep his herd on his own land.

Godfrey bought his land, bang in the middle of Uganda’s cattle corridor of rich grasslands, in 2000. It was too overgrown to sustain his herd, he says, so he took them into the reserve to graze.

“Around 2012, global-woods started training us in managing our herds. We learned how to improve our land, plant bananas and keep bee hives. From spending at least 12,000 Ugandan shillings a day on food, I have not bought food for three years.” Instead, he spends on school fees for seven children and the health of his cows.

Godfrey started cross-breeding his cows to increase milk yields. “I was getting a maximum of 10 litres a day from 80 cows; now I get 50 litres from 10 cows.” He sells 40 litres a day and keeps 10 for his family.

“They dug a valley tank over there,” he says, pointing to a dam, “and supplied me with a pump.” Global-woods has so far provided 15 dams specifically for cattle keepers.

“I am encouraged by frequent visits from global-woods, and the training, advice and technical support. The whole package is aimed at my own good and the good of my family, and I embrace it. My family is living a settled life now, and I am at peace ... I don’t have to feel guilty that I am doing something illegal.”

Godfrey now chairs the local cattle keepers’ association. “I am optimistic. Learning is gradual, and not all cattle keepers are moving at the same pace. But all of those around the reserve are seeing that it is time to change.”

CATTLE MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH A PINE PLANTATION IN THE FOREST RESERVE

Photo: Janette Bennett

CATTLE KEEPER GODFREY KUMAANA WITH SOME OF HIS HERD

Photo: Janette Bennett

An FSC story from Uganda
A CALF CALLED HOPE

In the village of Kyabajjo, Rogers Kuteesa says he has no need to farm in the forest, especially since he benefitted from a heifer scheme started by global-woods.

He came to the area in 2009: “My land was fragmented and I came to find land for grazing and farming.” But he struggled to make a living.

In 2012, he was given a cow that provided milk for his family and manure for his coffee and banana plantations. The cow also provided Rogers with a calf, which he called Kent. The original heifer went to another family, and then another. Kent has provided Rogers with a calf: he has named it Hope.

Rogers is a member of a group called Migongoloni (the voices of women and men). “Global-woods has supported us in many ways to help us grow as modern farmers – like trainings in planting and use of fertilizer.” Global-woods has signed a protocol with the group to protect the reserve.

Rogers’ plantations now feed his family and provide a healthy amount for sale. This covers school fees for his five children and is paying for a water tank. “Everything comes from here,” he says, sweeping his hand towards his banana trees.

DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

Four years ago, Karagi villagers got together with global-woods and set up a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), which entails involves saving, borrowing, repaying with interest, and sharing profits after a one-year cycle. “Until then, we were cultivating, digging, nothing else,” chair Regina Makyazib recalls.

Global-woods offers the group regular training and help in financial management, but the dreams and successes belong to the 29 women and six men who make up the VSLA. Not one sees a need to cultivate in the forest. And each has a story to tell.

Regina, for example, tells how she was terrified to spend her first loan. But she bought two piglets, borrowed more to buy a young bull, and became a millionaire when she sold them. Today, she owns a shop.

Anthony Drabome was once “deep in the village”, but is now happily running his own shop.

Moreem Kisakye has started a mobile money business and bought two plots. “We are all shiny now,” she says.