



NABC Lunch and Learn Q & A

Wakulima USA

Responses by David Bulindah & Dickson Njeri, Co-founders

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Resources:

- [Wakulima USA](#) website.
- [King County Conservation Futures](#) grant funding.
- [American Farmland Trust Brighter Future Fund](#).
- For more info, contact David Bulindah, David@wakulimausa.org; or Dickson Njeri, Dickson@wakulimausa.org.

Q&A

Q: What organizations did you collaborate with to apply for the Conservation Futures Tax levy funds (CFT)?

A: Several years ago, we met with Sean Watts Consulting and Sean is the person who told us about the CFT. His team encouraged us to apply for the funding, but we weren't sure how to start. Then Luke Woodward from NABC became very interested in the work we were doing and supported us in different ways. Then we got Maxime Etilé from NABC, who now is serving as our Executive Director, and he helped us through the process of writing and refining the grants we got. King County also provided a consultant who helped us with grant language. The WA Farmland Trust (WFT) also held our hands as we put the pieces in place to help us get the \$1.5 million and find land.

We thought that, with the grant award, we could go buy five acres of land anywhere in King County. We did not know that, because it is public money, we had to do exactly what it said on paper. We have had a rough time finding five acres of land, so we have requested a window of accommodation to find and bid on the land.

(Dani Madrone) [American Farmland Trust Brighter Future Fund](#) has a grant opportunity you might consider. The next grant cycle opens in July. You can [sign up to be notified here](#). The goal of this program is to help farmers: 1) Improve farm viability; 2) Access, transfer, or permanently protect farmland; or 3) Adopt regenerative agricultural practices.

Q: What are some of the “culturally appropriate crops” you grow for your community?

A: We grow a variety of crops, most of which do well in warm weather (late May to mid-Sept). We grow: African nightshade (managu), cow peas (kunde), Amaranth seeds and greens (terere), Spider Plant (saget), pumpkin leaves (kahorora), okra, and varieties of African corn and beans. We are

looking for our own space where we can have a greenhouse so we can grow these year-round. They are in great demand.

Q: Can you share who is on your land search team/committee?

A: We have staff from King County, WFT, and NABC, and our realtor. Anybody who is interested in supporting our vision is welcome to join in the land search (email David or Dickson). We meet bi-weekly.

Q: What percentage of crops do you sell, and do any of those go to food banks that help the communities you work with access your products?

A: We donate 10% of our crops to Des Moines and Kent food banks, and we encourage our farmers to donate to local churches that community members attend because some people don't want to go to food banks.

Q: Do you find that more people are using the food you grow because it is culturally relevant and they know what it is and what to do with it, compared with what they get at a traditional food bank?

A: Yes, but we cannot meet the demand. There has been a huge influx of African immigrants in our region. The African stores we normally take the foods to don't have enough. They import dried foods, from Kenya for example, to meet the demand. We hope we can grow more with the new farm, but I doubt we will meet the entire demand.

Q: Do you contract with food banks or just donate, or both?

A: We just donate. We also take food directly to some elders who can't go to the farm or church. We get good feedback from them because they are familiar with these foods and can't access them in other ways.

Q: In Thurston County there is a World Relief center resettling folks and I'm wondering about the demand for the type of work you do. What kind of support is generally needed for your organization to grow and meet the need, and for other organizations that do similar work in other immigrant communities?

A: Mainly we've been trying to build the capacity of our organization to have enough staff to do the work that is required. We need translation services for people who don't speak English, technical support, and equipment.

WSDA gave us a reimbursable grant of \$70,000 to purchase a van by June, but we have put the money upfront, which we do not have, and then we will be reimbursed. We need help building the funding base to pay for these types of upfront costs before we get reimbursed by grants.

We are constrained by grant requirements that restrict who we can hire to do the work, and some grants require a certain level of organization, which creates a barrier.

We hope to partner with a university/college to research the nutritional value of the culturally appropriate foods we grow. If we had that information, it would help us market those products for their health benefits.