Cassava (Manihot esculenta) is the second most important staple crop in Uganda. Processing and marketing cassava chips is a major activity providing income mainly for rural women. Cassava chips market is big and growing. Total chips consumption was 620,183t (2013) of which 368,279t was marketed. By 2018, market demand will reach 563,717t.

Major growth market segments include food, bakery products i.e., chapatis, mandazis, pancakes, industrial brewing all of which demand quality chips at competitive prices. Improving chipping, drying facilities and creating more robust private sector driven and managed inclusive and better functioning value chains will in turn lead to increased productivity, more incomes and food security. Apart from enough finances, drying is the most critical challenge. Artificial drying is expensive and drying especially during the wet season. During sunny conditions, there is risk of contamination from sand while during the rainy season it is very difficult to dry chips leading to low volumes, drying techniques and increasing quantities to reduce unit costs of production.

There is evidence of increased demand for drying and chipping technologies. Traders in major urban centers rewash the chips to try and make an improved product. This product is sold at a premium which is higher by between 100 and 200 shillings, depending on the season. All processing centers have been contacted for supplies of high quality chips but they have failed to meet the demand. Sun drying is the mode of drying and with current rainfall season, it is very difficult for the processing to achieve commercial volumes of good quality. Most of them do not have chip optimum sizes which also has implications in terms of drying.

There is a huge opportunity to improve competitiveness of improved cassava chips by improving drying techniques and increasing quantities to reduce unit costs of production. However, new drying technologies, efficient chipping and new all inclusive business models have to be identified and promoted if postharvest losses in cassava chips are to be reduced and utilization expanded. Increased processing will create more income opportunities especially for women thereby improving gender balanced development.