

Justification. The residents say they hope the factory will boost commercial farming

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NAKASEKE. Nakaseke residents have welcomed the opening of a fruit processing factory in the district, saying it will boost commercial agriculture in the area.

President Museveni last Wednesday commissioned the Shs1.6 billion factory that is expected to provide technical support, marketing and product development to different farmers involved in promoting commercial agriculture.

And now farmers say the factory presents them an opportunity to receive training in growing the right varieties of mangoes needed at the factory.

The district chairperson, Mr Ignatius Kiwanuka Koomu, said the factory, which currently depends on mangoes from outside the district, will greatly benefit farmers who have started growing their own mangoes to meet the demand.

"One time, we rallied our farmers to grow tomatoes after getting assurance that the tomato processing plant promised by investors would provide the market for the cultivated tomatoes. The farmers were left disappointed. We are happy to witness the commissioning of the first fruit processing plant for dry mangoes and pineapple fruits," Mr Koomu said in an interview last weekend.

"We also have the advantage that the factory has provided jobs to our people. We have more than 100 female workers already employed at the factory, according to the information availed to us. We expect this number to grow bigger when the factory expands," SARAH NAJJUMA, DISTRICT WOMAN MP

He said the factory managers have already informed them that they need 20 tonnes of the mango fruits per day.

"We believe the people of Nakaseke can take advantage of this and supply at least five of

the required tonnage. This can only be possible once our people are encouraged to grow the variety of mangoes required at the factory," he added.

Appeal for seedlings

The district chairperson said farmers can be encouraged to grow mangoes by supplying them with seedlings.

The district Woman MP, Ms Sarah Najjuma, also rallied residents to take advantage of the fruit processing plant.

Ms Majorie Mugenyi, the factory manager, said the factory, which started processing dried mangoes and pineapples in December, has so far exported about 50 tonnes to the US, Canada and China.

"All the products processed are for export because there is ready market in the mentioned countries," Ms Mugenyi said in an interview at the weekend.

She revealed that the factory requires five mango varieties;

zillate, boribo, apple, tommy Atkins and kent. Ms Mugenyi said plans are underway to supply farmers in the area with the mango seedlings and provide an agronomist to ensure that they grow the mangoes and look after them for better production.

"It is also true we have to source for mangoes from different districts in the country because Nakaseke cannot provide all the mangoes needed. It is also true that we have seasons where Nakaseke and many parts of Uganda cannot provide the mangoes. We source the

mangoes from Kenya to ensure that the factory has enough materials," she said.

About 80 per cent of the workers at the fruit factory are residents of Nakaseke District.

Mr Amos Kayemba, a resident of Namusaale Village in Kyaka Sub-county, urged district leaders to engage managers of the Operation Wealth Creation programme to supply them with the mango fruit varieties needed by the factory.

"We also pray that we get better varieties which can mature quickly," said Mr Kayemba.

Nakaseke gets Shs1.6b fruit processing plant



Assessment. President Museveni (right) tours the mango fruit factory in Nakaseke District last week.
PHOTO BY DAN WANDERA

PRESIDENT'S APPEAL

While commissioning the factory, President Museveni rallied district leaders to help farmers realise the benefits of having such factories in their area. "Tell the farmers to grow more mangoes and engage in other money generating projects to ensure that their respective families move away from subsistence to commercial agriculture," Mr Museveni said.