

Scaling down food migration welcome

Uganda joined the rest of the world last Monday this week to mark World Food Day. The activities took place at Karengyere Demonstration Farm in Rubanda District under the theme: "Change the future of migration. Invest in Food Security and Rural Development."

Karengyere operates under Kachwekano Zonal Agricultural Research Development Institute (ZARDI) and the place has several demonstration gardens to showcase different improved crop varieties and best farming practices.

This year's World Food Day message was mainly about the importance of smallholder farmers and the enormous contribution they can make towards rural development if they are adequately empowered.

This is the reason the day's activities were held at Karengyere. If smallholder farmers are going to cause an agricultural revolution, they must grow improved crop varieties developed by scientists to give maximum yields and to withstand such challenges as pests and extreme weather conditions.

Science, and in particular biotechnology, will guide that revolution which is the reason there was such a heavy presence of agricultural research scientists at the function.

The farmers must be educated about soil fertility conservation, irrigation, fertiliser application, and a whole range of other practices. The Minister of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries, Vincent Ssempijja, called upon the farmers to fully embrace the crop varieties developed through biotechnology.

He assured them that GMO crops which will soon become available for growing bring new benefits to the farmers, the consumers, and the environment since they require less pesticide application. "They are entirely safe, after all, they have been prepared by fellow Ugandans," he said.

When rural households become food secure and have surplus food to sell we expect a decline in rural-urban migration as there will be creation of more agriculture related enterprises and jobs. Rosa Malango, the UN Country Representative, also emphasised the need for increased food production to reduce poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. She further observed that lack of peace in form of civil conflicts often results in forced migration and destitution. Displaced people have no land on which to grow food and they are a big threat to the environment.

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