Officials probed over suspicious agrochemicals

BY VISION REPORTER

Agriculture ministry officials, who cleared the 19 containers containing agrochemicals that Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) impounded over suspicious importation, are under investigation.

Sources revealed that the ministry officials at Malaba and Busia border posts cleared the agro-chemicals; pesticides called 'Mancozeb 80% WP' and herbicides known as 'Glyphosate 41 SL', yet the importers had no certificate from the ministry clearing the consignment.

Sunday Vision has established that a female official is one of those recently interrogated by a team of URA tax compliance officials for clearing the containers.

When contacted, agriculture minister Tress Bucyanayandi, said he had not got details pertaining to the agrochemicals in question, but promised to follow up the matter.

The Control of Agricultural Chemicals Act chapter 29 of 1989 gives the agriculture minister power to appoint suitably qualified public officers to act as inspectors and analysts of agricultural chemicals.

The probe comes at the time when the alleged directors, who imported the agrochemicals under the name Orbit Chemicals Uganda have failed to turn up at URA.

> **URA impounded 19 containers after busting a sophisticated racket**

Documents at the Registry of Companies show that Orbit Chemicals was registered in 1991, with two directors Collette Ruzindana and A.S Kibuuka Musoke, but the company has not been in operation for over a decade. It is not clear if the same directors are the ones who are involved in the current operations of the company.

URA impounded eight of the 19 containers after busting a sophisticated racket of suspected fraudsters, who reportedly collude with some top customs and security officials to import goods in the names of other renowned companies.

The scam came to light recently, when a consignment worth billions of shillings purportedly destined for Kenya, ended up in Uganda.

Sunday Vision has established that at least 11 containers consisting of agrochemicals worth over sh3.7b that were imported in the name of a Kenyan company, Orbit Chemical Industries Limited, ended up in the hands of unknown people.

Within URA, sources revealed, the racket involves a commissioner at the authority's headquarters in Nakawa, customs supervisors at Busia and Malaba border posts, a senior intelligence officer and IT officials.

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