

Improve agricultural extension services

Over the last two decades, the government has taken deliberate steps aimed to improve delivery of agriculture services. Key among the actions was in 2014 when in addition to increased funding, the government restructured the agriculture extension system on the single spine under the directorate of agriculture extension in an attempt to revamp the sector, which has been stagnating over time.

Despite the reforms and increase in funding, the sector's performance has not taken off in line with the national development plan. The agriculture sector's contribution to GDP at market price dropped by 0.2 per cent from 23.8 per cent to 26.6 per cent between 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years (UBoS 2016).

To understand the underlying factors, early this year the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) undertook a public expenditure governance study to assess the governance of public expenditure in Uganda's agriculture extension system and to also examine the nature in which decisions pertaining to public expenditure prioritisation and implementation are made.

Preliminary findings from the study carried out in 10 districts found out that the agricultural extension sys-



tem has gained mileage in providing free farm inputs to farmers. However, the intervention still faces grave challenges ranging from limited funding, few extension workers, and organisational challenges resulting from friction that exists between Operation Wealth Creation officers and the district leadership in some districts.

One of the challenges in agriculture extension system is the mismatch between what government supplied through OWC and what farmers need. As a result, some of the farm inputs such as cassava cuttings have been abused by being left to dry up due to poor quality and timing challenges. More so, farmers are encouraged to register for inputs and in turn, the government delivers what

is contrary to what they requested. Some districts have even rejected the inputs sent to them. Besides, those who distribute the inputs to farmers think anything can be grown anywhere.

Such challenges disorganise farmers. For instance, where one has prepared the land to grow beans, they are instead with either maize or coffee seedlings. To address this, the Directorate of Agriculture Extension should review the approach of delivering inputs. Instead of having farmers register for what they want, the directorate can provide the list of inputs it can supply. This will help farmers to plan accordingly.

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