



Butambala RDC Fred Bamwine (L) leads farmers for the banana training conducted by Prof Ssetuba Mukasa (C) on Saturday at Kabanyolo. PHOTOS BY GREGORY LUGAJU.

Five major talking points from the seventh Monitor Farm Clinic

Participants including top government officials, justices of High Court, lecturers, farmers, exhibitors, farming enthusiasts and students left Kabanyolo farm grounds on Saturday with new farming knowledge, writes **Denis Bbosa**.

It was a beehive of activity at Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute (MUARIK) Kabanyolo last Saturday as 700 active and prospective farmers gathered to tap from the abundant knowledge shared by the farming experts. Most participants termed it a productive and enriching clinic and asked for more of the same if agribusiness in Uganda is to move to another level. Herein we take a cursory look at

some of the fundamental lessons from practical lectures conducted on piggery, passion fruits, bananas, dairy and coffee enterprises.

1-Fake raw materials concern

The organisers of the Monitor Farm Clinic were spot on by inviting officials on the counterfeit team to address the participants. Fred Muwema of the Anti-Counterfeit Network (ACN) hinted on how they aim to bridge the intervention gaps in the fight against counterfeits. Prof David Mutetikka, an expert in piggery, revealed how pork quality was largely affected by the many unchecked feeds on the market.

Another coffee farmer gave a testimony about how her plantation stagnated yet she had acquired the seeds from 'a trusted' source. "Government should check on the imported feeds sold to farmers for improved quality," Prof Mutetikka

said. Experts advised participants to seek guidance about seedlings and other raw materials from established institutions such as Kabanyolo.

2-Farming knows no class, age

Participants were told to stop treating farming as a hobby but a business venture that can bring bread on the table - for the patient investors. Even when you have well-paying jobs like the many judicial and government officers

that attended, you have to seek surplus income from agribusiness. It is the large number of youths that attended that gave the facilitators a reason to smile. "If the youths embrace agriculture then the future of Uganda is bright. We had many youths attending the dairy farming clinic and we encourage more to come," Dr Constantine Katongole of Makerere University, remarked after the seminar. Agricultural Economics expert Dr Stephen Lwasa said that market for farm produce can even be achieved via social media platforms such as OLX and Facebook - another reason for the youths to venture into farming.

3-Agricultural diseases have revolved over time

The Monitor Farm Clinic in Mbarara in May centred on diseases in various enterprises yet the questions continued to pop up even when the day's agenda was different. Apart from coffee and dairy that are wrenched by numerous diseases, passion fruit production in Uganda is now faced with diseases such as brown spot, alaternaria, anthracnose, grease spot, collar rot and passion fruit virus. Julius Ahangaana, an agronomist and

4-AGRIBUSINESS STILL HAS VIRGIN OPPORTUNITIES

The participants were spoilt for choice at the farm clinic as many wanted to attend all the five enterprises - albeit happening simultaneously. Piggery, dairy and bananas had large numbers but experts lured participants not to ignore coffee and passion fruits production because they have hidden treasure in them. For better yields and wealth, the concept of intercropping was emphasised and many farmers seemed to have heeded the call. "I'm going to start a large intercropping farm in Mbale now that I have learned how to prepare a farm," revealed Paul Watsasi. "I am going to preach this to my husband and beg him to embrace passion fruit farming on our small land in Kamuh," Justice Esther Kisaakye told *Daily Monitor's* *Seeds of Gold* magazine.

passion fruit specialist based at Kabanyolo advised farmers to use virus free planting materials, destroy infected plants and control vectors. He is currently developing a scientific passion fruit model that will help revive 'orphan' passion fruit plants.

5-Government encouraged to embrace farm clinics

Enlightening rural participants on how they can get market for the products, Julian Adyeri Omalla aka Maama Cheers of Delight Company, elucidated on how she has been able to work with government projects such as Operation Wealth Creation and Naads to reach out to farmers.

"We are monitoring farmers in northern Uganda that grow the orchards we use in making our products and we avail them with seeds and market," she said.

Mr Fred Bamwine, the Resident District Commissioner of Butambala District, who attended the clinic to boost his piggery, dairy and banana ventures, said he will advise government to join educational programmes such as Monitor Farm Clinic. "Government needs to take such an activity to districts to help farmers understand the concept of Naads and how to benefit from it," he told *Seeds of Gold* magazine.

700

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MONITOR FARM CLINIC AT
KABANYOLO