

How farmer-friendly is the

In the 2018/19 budget, the Government will focus on distribution of farm inputs, improvement of livestock sector, irrigation, mechanisation and the Agriculture Credit Fund

By Joshua Kato

Close to 80% of the households in the country are involved in agriculture. In addition, going by Financial Year 2016/17 the sector contributed 24.9% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 72.9% of the total national export earnings.

Because of this, one would have expected that the agriculture sector would take the bulk of the budget, or at least 10% as advocated by several protocols, such as the African Union agreement where African governments were required to spend at least 10% of their budget on agriculture. However, this is not the case.

In the previous two budgets, allocation to the sector has averaged sh830b, representing around 3% of the entire national budget. It is likely to stay the same during the 2018/19 budget.

Key issues given emphasis include distribution of farm inputs, improvement of livestock especially cattle and irrigation, mechanisation and Agriculture Credit Fund (ACF).

Sh 830b

MONEY allocated to the agricultural sector in the previous two budgets

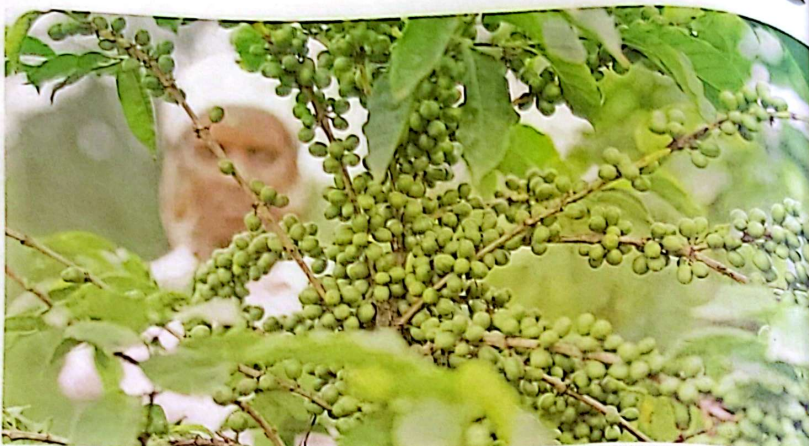
OWC/NAADS

The systematic distribution of improved seeds, planting and breeding materials through the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) initiatives constitutes a sizeable amount of the budget allocation to agriculture. In the last three budgets, an average sh500b has been allocated to this vote.

The agricultural ministry through NAADS secretariat procures inputs which are then given to soldiers under OWC to deliver to farmers. According to the agricultural ministry's Vincent Ssempiija, the process of distribution is going on well.

Some of the inputs given out include, seeds, heifers, citrus seedlings, tea seedlings and fish. "As a result, the acreage planted for the perennial crops has increased substantially with tea covering over 32,000 acres, 171,000 acres for oranges and 176,000 acres for mangoes," Ssempiija says.

The distribution of farm inputs is set to continue even in the 2018/19 financial year.



Coffee farming has now been taken on by the elite who had always shunned it and the number of big coffee farms is increasing



Ssempiija points out that there is improved production thanks to ease in delivery.

Dairy sector

If there is one sector that shows value for money, then it is the dairy one when its annual growth is compared to other areas.

Last year, two milk collection centres with total collection capacity of 8,200 litres of milk were rehabilitated and equipped in Kayunga and Masindi.

Over 1,000 dairy farmers are already utilising the two milk collection centres. The Government also rehabilitated Soroti milk collection centre and Entebbe Dairy Training School aimed at skilling dairy stakeholders in value addition and quality assurance.

As a result of strategic interventions in the dairy value chain, milk production has increased from 2.08b litres in 2015/16 to 2.23 billion litres in 2016/17 representing 6% growth rate. Production was estimated at around 2.5 billion litres at the end of 2017.

"The value of marketed milk has also increased by 5% from sh76m in 2015/16 to sh75m (about sh2.7 trillion) in 2016/17. Marketed milk stands at 80% of the total production and this is likely to increase further. Currently, from July 2017 to March 2018 dairy exports stand

at approximately \$150m," Ssempiija says.

Farmers however ask the Government to put more emphasis on disease control.

"We are affected by ticks and Foot and Mouth Disease. The Government should deal with them in a more effective way," Colonel Dick Bugingo, a farmer in Kiruhura says.

Overall, animal production has a proposed allocation of sh52.2b and this includes funding for vaccines. The 2018/19 allocation includes sh5b for testing tick resistance in livestock and sh7b for fighting foot and mouth disease (FMD).

Another sh5.9b is proposed for the Dairy Development Authority (DDA) to help improve the quality of milk across the country.

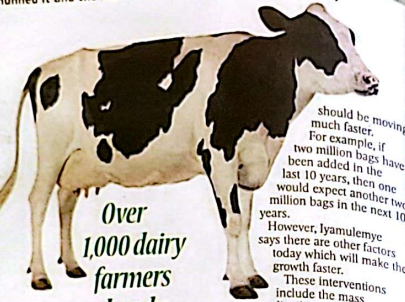
According to Dr James Muwanga, a veterinary officer, this amount is certainly too small when the requirements for effective vaccination of animals is put into consideration. For instance, a single cow requires a dose of sh7,000 every six months, which means each cow requires sh14,000.

With a cattle population of around 14 million in the country, it would take at least sh20b to effectively carry out this task.

DO YOU KNOW?
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Coffee production has continued to go up. In 2017, the actual value of exported coffee was around \$490m. However, according to the national coffee strategy, dubbed 2020, estimates \$2.5b would be realised by that year if 20 million bags of 60kg are exported as planned.

Coffee production has been on the upward trend reaching 4.3 million bags in 2016 and 4.6 million bags in



Over 1,000 dairy farmers are already utilising the two milk collection centres in Kayunga and Masindi

2017, which is the highest since 1995. Coffee farming has now been taken by the elite who had always shunned it and the number of big coffee farms is increasing.

The trend in growth is fairly encouraging according to Emmanuel Iyamulemye, the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) executive director.

He notes that in 2006, the country exported only 2.5 million bags. "If we are talking about 4.6 million bags at the moment, then you see a positive trend," Iyamulemye adds.

However, if the target is to have 20 million bags in 2020 and a further 30 million bags in 2040, the trend

should be moving much faster. For example, if two million bags have been added in the last 10 years, then one would expect another two million bags in the next 10 years.

However, Iyamulemye says there are other factors today which will make the growth faster. These interventions include the mass distribution of seedlings by the Government.

"The seedlings that have been distributed between 2015 and 2018 will be yielding by 2020/21. Obviously, production will increase," he says.

In the previous three budgets, at least sh60b has been allocated to distribution of coffee seedlings. The number of farmers involved in generation of coffee seedlings has grown to more than 2,000 nursery operators with capacity to produce 300 million seedlings per year, to make 900 million bags by 2019.

The capacity to generate coffee seedlings by modern bio-technology such as tissue culture by the private sector has been developed where three laboratories are now involved in the generation of seedlings. Through further research, the average number of trees per acre will be increased from 450 at the moment to around 900 by 2020.

"Some of the leading coffee growing countries are doing it and yielding much higher than us," Mathias Kasamba, a coffee farmer and trainer says. This will obviously

2018/2019 budget?

Challenges

The distribution of farm inputs has been met by many challenges.

Among these are late distribution of inputs some of which were of poor quality inputs.

Last week, farmers in some districts rejected farm inputs. In Nakaseke district, farmers rejected a truck of coffee seedlings because they were distributed late. In Kamuli farmers rejected poor quality cassava cuttings and in Buikwe, farmers rejected poor quality heifers.

NAADS officials pointed out that some of the inputs are not poor quality, however, they may be affected by the handling process during transportation. "Procurement of the inputs is done by National Agricultural Advisory Services, Operation Wealth Creation simply distributes them. We do not do procurement," Major Tabaro Kiconco, spokesperson for OWC says.



The agriculture ministry procured equipment such as tractors which will be hired out to organised farmers to improve their productivity

increase yields per acre.

Kasamba explains that this can only be achieved if among others, farmers use fertilisers and improved seedlings.

"If farmers use fertilisers, then they can plant more seedlings per acre," he says. This will help achieve the long term budgetary of exporting at least 10 million bags by 2020.

Livestock sector development This vote, directly implemented by the National Genetic Resources Centre (NAGRC) has been receiving an average sh10b for the last two years.

The vote will almost remain the same in the year 2018/19. According to Ssempiija, there are also moves to improve the quality of the livestock.

"The Government is promoting crossing local animals to improved breeds which can produce 12 and 18 litres of milk per day. With F1 (improved breeds), a farmer with good management gets sh1.5m per animal per year," Ssempiija says.

He adds that six cows of 75% dairy crosses bring in more than sh20m a year from milk.

In the last year, NAGRC has improved the beef animal's average daily weight gain to 250g per day, with F1-50% and this has reduced the market age tremendously from three to four years to one to 1.5 years.

Poultry Kuroiler chicken which are disease-resistant and fast-growing have been introduced.

A Kuroiler lays 150-200 eggs in a year compared to the 40 eggs produced by indigenous birds.

Cocks weigh between three-four kg within four months.

"To ensure Uganda benefits from this, 2,305,194 kuroilers were distributed to 5,500 households and 40,000 birds have been exported to regional markets," Ssempiija says.

MECHANISATION

Mechanisation in Uganda is still low.

"Sometimes you have to wait for as long as two months to get a tractor to plough your farm," David Kisinzigu from Nakaseke says.

By the time the tractor comes, the planting season is gone.

There are an estimated 1,300 farm tractors in the country at the moment. Most of these, privately-owned, are located in the districts of Amuru and Nwoya, Kapchorwa and on large estates such as Kakira and Kinyara.

The proposed total of farm tractors to be procured between 2016 and 2019 was around 185. Of these, 40 tractors and implements were delivered in 2016.

"Forty tractors and implements were delivered in time and given to organised farmers in 10 districts," Ssempiija says.

In 2017, another 50 tractors were delivered to farmers mainly in the cattle corridor to help them grow grass for animals. In the 2018/19

budget, sh10b is proposed for that purpose.

In addition to directly giving out tractors, the Government has continued to exempt tractors from taxes. This is done to help farmers ease the acquisition of farm tractors.

The agricultural ministry procured earth-moving equipment including tractors for dry hire to farmers for bush clearing, ploughing or digging up dams and valley tanks.

These have been used to clear bushes and open 11,000 acres of farm land for agricultural production in various parts of the country and to rehabilitate 158 farm access roads (about 420km) in 14 districts.

In the next financial year, the Government is set to open regional mechanisation centres to increase access to this machinery in various parts of the country.

"To this effect the agricultural ministry has recruited 33 senior agricultural engineers," Ssempiija says.



24.9%
AGRICULTURE contributed 24.9% of the national Gross Domestic Product and 72.9% of the total national export earnings

a positive budgetary performance of around 80% in the year ending 2017.

Irrigation sector Ssempiija says in the last budget, the



at 10 months at an estimated weight of 80-90 kg live weight compared to the indigenous ones which do so at an average weight of 40-60kg. Breeds such as Comborough can produce over 14 piglets (25 piglets/year) and at market price of sh150,000, this translates into sh42m per sow per year for the farmer. Overall, NAGRC reported

Government made a commitment to invest in water for production infrastructure to boost commercial agriculture and industrial activities.

The emphasis was to be placed on construction of large and small-scale water schemes for irrigation, livestock and rural industries.

Ssempiija explains that the Government has commissioned the construction of five irrigation schemes covering a total 4,038 hectares at Dohoi II in Butaleja; Mubuku II in Kasese; Wadala in Nebbi district; Torchi in Oyam district and Ngenge in Kween district.

The schemes are expected to be completed by June 2019. Detailed engineering designs have been completed for irrigation schemes in Sironko/Acomai in Bukedea and Bulambuli districts, Atari in Kween/Bulambuli district, and Namatala in Budaka/Mbale/Butaleja district to cover a total of 5,590 hectares.

Ssempiija says the agricultural ministry has also constructed and rehabilitated 155 valley tanks in last three budget years.

"We have constructed two of them in northern region, 75 in the region, 20 in the western and the southern region.

The total capacity stands at 8,000,000 cubic metres in the drought and cattle corridor di countrywide," Ssempiija says

Beef sector Sh10b has been allocated to improve beef cattle grow country.

This is intended to quick growth to achieve at least two-three years.

To increase the production of export grade cattle and exports, a modern holding (five square miles in size quarantine station (four in size) have been constructed at Katonga farm in Kisozi.

These bulls will be used to modern export abattoir which is a joint venture between the agricultural minister National Enterprises C (NEC).