

NAADS farmers face arrest

MBARARA

by Abdulkarim Ssengendo

National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) stakeholders in the south western region have resolved to prosecute farmers who misuse and sell off inputs given to them under the programme.

During a zonal annual review and planning meeting held at Igongo Country Hotel in Mbarara last week, the stakeholders agreed that before inputs are supplied to any farmer, they will have to first sign a Memorandum of Understanding with NAADS.

They also unanimously agreed that local governments enact bylaws to prosecute farmers who misuse and sell out the inputs donated to them. Their resolution came after they were informed by Samuel Mugasi, the NAADS executive director, that farmers were getting inputs without any binding agreement.

"When we take farmers who sell the agricultural inputs to Police, they say they have sold their own goods. When the Police asks for exhibits, we have no evidence to pin them and so they are set free," Mugasi said.

"Recently, during my monitoring exercise in Kasese, we found out that one of the beneficiaries who received an in-calf connived with local council officials and sold it. We arrested the man and took him to the Police, but he was later released due to lack of a clear charge. He claimed he had sold his cow," Tom Muhoozi, the director



NAADS and OWC officials visiting some farmers supported under the programme. Photo by Abdulkarim Ssengendo

BETWEEN THE LINES:

Stakeholders in the South Western region have resolved to prosecute farmers who misuse and sell inputs given to them by NAADS and OWC

of the NAADS board added.

Godfrey Baryomunsi, the Mbarara district vice-chairman said most inputs supplied have been misused.

Under the current guidelines, farmers are identified, assessed

and registered at parish and sub-county level and then given inputs.

Other challenges tackled at the meeting, included the late delivery of inputs and those which are not requested for, durability of inputs, inadequate extension services, poor quality planting and stocking and overwhelming demand for inputs.

During a one-day field visit to beneficiaries, Proscovia Mutumba, the crop development officer at NAADS secretariat, encouraged leaders to prepare and train the would-be beneficiary farmers so that they get the best out of the

seeds distributed to them. She also urged extension workers to always make proper follow-up of OWC and NAADS inputs and give farmers technical advice.

She encouraged farmers to make use of the available opportunities to improve their farms and emphasised diversification. Addressing the challenge of drought, which farmers raised as a major challenge affecting them, Mutumba said the Government is putting in place facilities for irrigation for both small scale and large farmers. She encouraged the farmers to conserve the environment.