

BOB NUWAGIRA NEMA SPOKESPERSON SAID 6,000 PEOPLE ENCROACHED ON THE WETLAND

KIBUKU

By Faustine Odeke

Fifteen people were on Tuesday morning rounded up by the environmental protection force in partnership with the Police in Kibuku district over the degradation of Limoto swamp.

The swamp, covering 35 square kilometres, is connected to River Mpologoma catchment area and is the main water bank and source of rainwater in the region.

The arrests followed warnings and sensitisation meetings by the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) for the residents to vacate the wetland in vain. The farmers say the Kibuku constituency MP, Herbert Kinobere, encouraged them to continue farming in the wetland.

Twelve men and three women confessed that Kinobere told them not to leave the swamp and advised them to arm themselves in case any body dared to chase them out of the swamp.

Several acres of rice gardens were slashed, bringing business in the nearby market to stand still. The Police also recovered hoes, pangas, slashers, jerrycans and basins.

Dr Daniel Babikwa, the NEMA director of district support co-ordination and public education said the move followed a long-standing order for the residents to vacate the wetland.

"For the last two years, we have been sensitising the residents on the dangers of degrading the swamp. We even demarcated where they should stop and also made restoration orders. Unfortunately, the MP made public announcements encouraging the residents



Rice gardens being destroyed. Kibuku residents defied NEMA and cultivated the Limoto swamp in Kibuku district. Photo by Faustine Odeke



Babikwa

regenerate.

"This is the only source of water to the district for both animals and domestic use. We will not allow residents to pollute swamp with chemicals, which affect the people using the water and the lifespan of fish," Nuwagira said.

The suspects were charged with environmental degradation, contrary to section 101 and 102 of Environmental Act and section 36 and 37 of national environment management regulation.

Kinobere responds

"I did not encourage anyone to remain in the wetland. My only problem with NEMA is that they are not sensitising people on the advantages of having wetlands.

"NEMA is also using force to evict people from the wetlands, which is not good. Even President Yoweri Museveni recently opposed this eviction of people from the wetlands. We have to talk to the people nicely.

"Personally, where I come from in Kibuku, people have since vacated wetlands, because I have talked to them, but NEMA is using force. You do not just wake up and evict people," Kinobere said.

NEMA slashes rice in wetlands, 15 arrested

to go back to the swamp," Babikwa said.

He said they have petitioned the Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, to prevail over Kinobere, warning that they will not hesitate in arresting him.

Bob Nuwagira, the NEMA spokesperson, said 6,000 people had originally

encroached on the wetland.

Nuwagira said by November 2016, over 1,000 encroachers had left the wetland and this was as a result of engagement by all the district leaders including the resident district commissioner and the chief administrative officer.

He added that during the festive season, Kinobere

encouraged people to go back to the wetland, promising them political cover in case of any intervention from NEMA and the Police. He said even the people who had left returned to the wetland.

He said they will slash all crops in the wetland in order to allow the wetland to

NFA arrests 30 over fresh forest clearing

KAGADI

By Ismael Kasobya

The National Forestry Authority (NFA) Kagadi has embarked on operations to save remaining forest cover in central forest reserves as farmers rush to clear land in preparation for coming farming season.

Usia Ndyababo, NFA Kagadi manager said despite the Court order restricting forest encroachers cutting down again.

Ndyababo said they were informed indiscriminate forests for area residents pa area.

"We have operations forest reserves three districts Kagadi area save natural Ndyababo.

He said he will be arraigned charged with destruction of National Tree I.

Section 17 of the Forest Act prohibits clearing of forest land in the area.