

# Fire ravages Masindi cane plantations

MASINDI

By Priscillar Nyamahunge

Rampant fires are destroying sugarcane plantations belonging to outgrowers and Kinyara Sugar factory.

According to the Kinyara corporate communications manager, Kirunda Magoola, a total of 592.2 hectares had been burnt by Saturday last week. Of the 592.2, over 344 hectares belong to outgrowers.

"Most of this cane is young and cannot be salvaged meaning it is a total loss of revenue to the farmer, the district, the industry and the entire nation," Magoola told *New Vision*.

Magoola said the community needs to interest itself in fighting the fires because such incidents are indiscriminate.

"We cannot hope for unilateral solutions spearheaded by one entity to solve the issue of fires. Fires are indiscriminate of property. We, therefore, need to find community-based solutions," Magoola

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

Jealousy, charcoal burning, land wrangles, and bush burning were cited as some of the reasons for the fires.

said.

Since December 2017, Kinyara Sugar Limited, in partnership with Masindi district, sub-county and parish officials, have been carrying out sensitisation meetings, calling on people to guard sugarcane plantations against fires.

While addressing cane farmers during a stakeholders' meeting at Budongo sub-county headquarters recently, Cosmas Byaruhanga, the Masindi district chairperson, called on farmers to work with their leaders, security and Kinyara officials to guard against cane fires.

Kenneth Nyendwoha, the LC3 chairperson of Budongo, which is one of the major cane growing areas in the district, said arsonists are similar to murderers because of the pain

they inflict on sugarcane growers.

Reports indicate jealousy, charcoal burning, land wrangles and bush burning as some of the causes of the rampant cane fires.

## What the law says

According to Section 329 of the Penal Code Act, any person who wilfully and unlawfully sets fire to or otherwise destroys or damages a crop of cultivated produce, a crop of hay or grass under cultivation, any standing trees, saplings or shrubs whether indigenous or not, but under cultivation, commits a felony and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of seven years.

Section 330 of the same Act says any person who attempts unlawfully to set fire to any such thing as is mentioned in Section 329 or wilfully and unlawfully sets fire to anything which can cause anything mentioned in section 329 to catch fire, commits a felony and is liable to seven years imprisonment after conviction.