

Frank Tumwebaze, politician

# Govt has not killed animal research institute in Tororo

The *New Vision* of Monday, January 2, carried an opinion by Dr. Josue Okoth titled: *Why Kill Research at Tororo Animal Research Institute?*

In his article, Dr. Okoth alleges that "The only research institute carrying out animal research in Uganda is dead in preference for mining minerals at Osukuru hills".

Both the title and assertions contained in the article are outright misleading. How can research be "killed" or "dead" when researchers are alive?

The innuendo in Dr Okoth's opinion is that the Government does not seem to care about the livestock institute and is, therefore, killing it in preference for the minerals factory. That is not correct.

There is no doubt that the livestock research institute is an important facility considering that it has been engaging in livestock breeding, developing new genetic breeds, developing good varieties of pasture and legumes and currently working on an effective vaccine for ticks.

This is not about to stop. The fundamental point here is that the livestock institute falls under the wide area in Tororo established to hold valuable minerals like iron and phosphorus. In order to exploit these minerals, a factory has to be located there where the raw materials are and not elsewhere.

While the institute can move anywhere and continue to execute its mandate, the factory cannot just move anywhere. This is the logic the writer ignores or glosses over. So it was inevitable that the Government had to find another location for the livestock research institute, considering that the mining activities would greatly interfere with the research work.

The livestock research institute has not been abandoned as Dr Okoth seems to indicate. The facility will be relocated to the 8,000-hectare Maruzi farm, one of the several under the National Animal Genetic Resource Centre (Nagrc). Kasolwe Stock Farm in Kamuli which had been considered first is much smaller. NaLIRRI will, therefore, move to its new premises in a phased manner, to ensure minimal interruption to their work—with projections being total relocation in two years.

For benefit of readers, I wish to provide some background information. The factories of Osukuru Industrial Complex are located in the Sukulu Hills in Osukuru County, Tororo District, Eastern Region of Uganda, just outside the town of Tororo and approximately 230 kilometres (140 miles), by road, east of Kampala.

The approximate coordinates of the Osukuru Industrial Complex are 0°39'00.0"N, 34°09'59.0"E. The industrial complex sits on 26.5



The National Livestock Research and Resource Institute In Tororo. Part of its land has been given to Osukuru Industrial Complex

square kilometres (6,500 acres) of land in Osukuru sub-county and in neighbouring Rubongli sub-county, Tororo District.

Once complete, the industrial complex will consist of a phosphate fertilizer factory, a steel manufacturing factory, a sulphuric acid manufacturing factory, a rare earth minerals mining plant and the Osukuru Thermal Power Station with capacity generation of 12 megawatts. In 2013, the Government began negotiations with Guangzhou Dong Song Energy Company Limited from China to set up mining and manufacturing operation at Osukuru. In 2014, the Government and landowners agreed to begin exploration and construction.

The project will cost an estimated \$560m to \$620m and is jointly owned by the Government of Uganda and Guangzhou Dong Song Energy Company Limited, a private Chinese company.

The mineral deposits at Sukuru Phosphate Project are expected to last over 100 years and will generate an annual turnover of \$350m.

Sukuru Phosphate Project will directly employ more than 1,000 Ugandans and will generate more indirect jobs and deliver other benefits like foreign exchange savings, market for surrounding communities engaged in agriculture and other various forms of production. For example, Uganda currently imports all its fertilizer ingredients, making them costly and beyond the reach of most smallholder farmers, who make up most of the agricultural sector.

The Tororo fertilizer plant will have the capacity to produce at least 300,000 tonnes of phosphate fertilizer a year while the steel mill is expected to produce 300,000 tonnes of steel a year.

Uganda approximately imports iron and steel worth \$114,393,217 annually. Overall, in 2014, Uganda exported \$2.34b and imported \$6.03b, resulting in a negative trade balance of \$3.7b, making the country 125th largest importer in the world. For example, imports of Uganda increased at an annualised rate of 7.4%, from \$4.22b in 2009 to \$6.03b in 2014 (OEC 2015). How do get out of this situation? The answer heavily lies in manufacturing industry and Ugandans everywhere must be



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vanguards of this industrialisation crusade.

President Museveni has spent considerable time and effort to ensure this project takes off by meeting and resolving contradictions among old prospectors and the new investors, getting the local population to look at the wider picture and advantages that will accrue from the project despite attempts by some local politicians to fail the project.

It is good to note that the majority of Tororo residents and other stakeholders of the area now fully appreciate this project and are optimistic about its operations.

All Ugandans must understand that without industrialisation, we shall never solve the question of jobs. We

must, therefore, oppose those that are always quick at misleading citizens into opposing projects that have potential to accelerate industrialisation in Uganda. This economic sabotage cannot go on, if we are to transform our communities and the country. For example, Dr. Okoth as an educated citizen fully knows that one of the major factors that determine location of any industry is the location of raw materials they need. But research institutions can be located anywhere. So why make this an issue? What is the motivation? Misleading communities in Tororo against this investment?

The National Livestock Research and Resource Institute is engaged in four core programmes – namely; Livestock Health Research, Livestock Nutrition Research, Livestock Breeding Research and Apiculture Research. Successful implementation of these programmes is not tied to a particular location. These will be re-located to allow manufacturing industry to succeed at Osukuru hills.

Like the President mentioned in his end of year message, industrialisation is, both an instrument of liberation and a means of achieving prosperity. And as McKinsey and Company (2016) indicates, Africa must accelerate the creation of wage-paying employment. Failure to do so will consign millions of households to toiling in subsistence activities.

Africa has the potential to create between 54 million and 72 million more stable wage-paying jobs by 2020, with much of the job growth coming from manufacturing, agriculture and retail and hospitality.

This would raise the share of workers with wage-paying jobs to between 32% and 36% by 2020. Uganda's Vision 2040 calls for the development of a vibrant and competitive economy in which industry has a significant role in diversifying production patterns and in producing high quality goods for export.

Uganda cannot, therefore, conserve the colonial mode of doing business where main raw materials, namely, minerals and agricultural goods, were

produced and exported in their crude forms thus ensuring a steady supply of raw materials for the industrial expansion of some of the countries of Europe and the USA.

In line with implementation of Vision 2040, Uganda is heavily investing in industrialisation enablers. These are electricity, roads and railway. For example, on the River Nile, Ayago-840MW, Oriang-592MW, Uhuru-400MW, Kiba- 300MW dams area being built. The Government also plans to develop over 40 mini-hydro dams and some of them are already under construction. These are: Nyagak III 5.4MW, Nyamwamba 9MW, Muvumba 5.4MW, Achwa/Agago 83MW. The President recently announced that manufacturers will be provided electricity at the cost of five American cents per unit. More electricity and better network of roads will mean faster industrialisation.

As we all know, Uganda is working with the Government of Kenya to modernise the railway by building the Standard Gauge Railway. This will bring the cost of transport for a 32 metric tonnes container to Mombasa from \$3,500 by road, to \$1,650 by railway and it will only take one day compared to the present railway which takes 21 days.

It will also save Uganda's roads from damage caused by the huge lorries carrying what should be ferried by the train. As a result of some of these focused efforts, Uganda already has 3,100 factories and 3,475 tourism related companies and assets.

The two are already employing about 1.1 million people. All the above, therefore, mean that growth, development and jobs, will not come about, by just wishing and lamentations – but rather by action.

People of Tororo and rest of Uganda should support every effort that will expand our country's manufacturing capacity. Government of Uganda will also continue to strengthen National Agricultural Research Organisation and other research institutions across the country. The Government is conscious of the fact that knowledge generation expands efficiency of industries and broadens innovations. And that is what Uganda envisions on leap to First World.

The writer is the Minister of ICT and National Guidance