

# Kabarole tea farmers suffer losses over quality

**KABAROLE**

By Wilson Asimwe

Tea farmers in Kabarole district are stuck with their harvest because of its poor quality.

Several farmers in the sub-counties of Busoro, Kijura, Hakibaale, Kiko and Rwetera are counting losses due to the poor quality of the green tea leaves from their gardens.

Tea factories in the district buy up to 75% of the green leaf from outgrowers and get the remaining 15% from their own plantations.

Dismus Kwezi, a tea farmer in Busoro sub-county, told officials from the agriculture ministry and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) on Monday that the quality of tea leaves produced by the farmers has been deteriorating over time and as a result farmers are suffering losses.

Kwezi said many outgrowers do not use sufficient fertilisers to replenish soil fertility. He added that there is poor access to the tea collection centres and lack of irrigation equipment during the dry spells.

According to Kwezi, the outgrowers are supposed to supply the factories with soft and moist



Officials from the agriculture ministry and OWC touring a tea plantation in Kabarole on Monday. The quality of tea has dropped due to poor farming practices. Photo by Wilson Asimwe

green leaf of fibrous quality.

“Farmers need to be retrained because many of them do not know how to harvest the tea leaves and as a result it affects the prices. Currently, a kilogramme of tea leaves is at sh500,” Kwezi said.

He said farmers are yet to adapt to better tea farming practices to improve the quality of their harvest.

Juliet Akugizibwe, a tea farmer in Kiko town council, said many farmers are using locally produced manure, which does not produce

**ON THE GROUND**

■ Prof. Arseni Semana, a NAADS official, said tea farmers need to be retrained of the best farming practices and also given farm inputs.

good quality tea.  
Prof. Arseni Semana, a board

member of National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), said farmers should be sensitised on proper tea farming methods and given inputs to improve the quality of produce which is exported to China, the UK, Canada and Pakistan.

“There is need for a tea regulatory authority to address the concerns of tea quality because what is produced in Uganda is low compared to other countries. We risk having our produce expelled