

Regional News

www.monitor.co.ug

BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY

Northern region to get 15 million coffee seedlings

GULU. The government has rolled out an initiative to distribute up to 15 million seedlings across northern Uganda to boost coffee production.

Mr Julius Twiine, a senior agricultural officer-in-charge of mid-northern Uganda at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, made the revelation on the sidelines of an annual Gulu Agricultural Trade Fair at Kaunda Grounds at the weekend.

In an interview with this publication, Mr Twiine mentioned that the seedlings are intended for distribution across Acholi, Lango, West Nile and Karamoja sub-regions in 2026.

Mr Twiine said the department of coffee, which is under the Agriculture ministry, wants to expand coffee growing in northern Uganda and generate 20 million bags by 2030, with 4 million bags coming from the north. As a result,

the ministry wants more than 150,000 acres of coffee planted in the next three years across the region.

The distribution of the seedlings is set to commence this month to enable farmers plant before the onset of the dry season.

"We have received requests for almost

20 million seedlings across West Nile, Lango, Acholi and Karamoja. Our teams are finalising extensive sensitisation of farmers and mapping their gardens before the distribution," Mr Twiine said.

"We will provide these seedlings for free, but we are calling upon farmers to prepare their gardens early, provide

the right feeds, and follow proper agronomic practices to achieve a 90 percent survival rate," he said.

Under the initiative, the department of coffee development, formerly the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), which was placed under the Agriculture ministry, will also offer input support, including banana suckers.

"The seedlings will be supplied by nursery bed operators certified by UCDA, with each seedling procured at Shs2,000. We will provide one million suckers for shading the coffee, as well as shade trees," Mr Twiine added.

Meanwhile, Mr Peter Banya, the deputy resident city commissioner for Gulu, called for the deployment of coffee-specific extension service providers to ensure farmers receive advice on crop management.

"Often our farmers struggle to care

for their crops once the government provides planting materials, leading to poor outcomes... This time, UCDA should ensure proper field staff deployment to supervise production," Mr Banya said.

Mr Bernard Obace, the chairperson of the Production Committee for Apac District, said resuming the free supply of coffee seedlings and other planting materials to farmers will encourage more farmers to adopt the cash crop.

Four years ago, UCDA discontinued the free supply of coffee seedlings to farmers, causing coffee nursery operators to cease seedling production, disrupting supplies and increasing seedlings prices.

Mr Obace said the cessation of free coffee seedling support for small, medium and large-scale farmers compromised the vision 2030 of contributing towards the 20 million bags and was a big setback to popularising coffee production across the north.

GOVT'S EFFORTS

The government has recently shifted its focus to transforming northern Uganda into a new coffee-producing frontier due to its vast arable land, a favourable climate and fertile soil quality. The government has also announced plans to establish a modern coffee production hub in

northern Uganda at Awach Sub-county in Gulu District. The facility, whose construction is yet to commence, is estimated to cost approximately Shs30b. It will also include an analytical laboratory, a modern training unit on the coffee value chain and a processing centre. The laboratory will serve the Acholi, Lango, and West Nile sub-regions.

Mpande, 22, lost his