

Govt told to sensitise grain farmers

By Priscillar Nyamahunge

Grain farmers in Masindi district have requested the Government to sensitise residents about post-harvest management and quality control of maize.

Jaster Karwemera, the managing director of Agro-Net Farmers Limited, said many people find challenges in post-harvest handling of their maize. "Local farmers should be taught how to harvest, dry and store their maize until they deliver it to the market," Karwemera said recently.

She said some people harvest maize and contaminate it with soil in the process of drying it. Karwemera said farmers should be taught how to use the available facilities such as tarpaulins to ensure that quality is maintained.

"There is no way quality control can improve without mass sensitisation. Even if it means teaching people about post-harvest management in churches, markets, on radio stations and other information outlets, the Government should take it up," Karwemera said.

BETWEEN THE LINES

■ Farmers should be taught how to use the available facilities such as tarpaulins to ensure that quality is maintained.

Simon Onadra, a large-scale maize farmer, however, called on the Government to construct storage and drying facilities in villages.

"During such rainy seasons, tarpaulins can only help keep the maize clean but not to dry it. The Government needs to consider setting up storage and drying facilities in villages, or else, farmers will continue failing to meet the required standards," Onadra said.

Onadra said the stores should be used as centres for selling maize so that the Government can take up the role of quality maintenance.

"The Government should take up the buying of maize and the task of quality maintenance such that the market it (Government) targets in other countries is not affected," Onadra said.

Kizito Kiiza, the country manager of Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC), said grain dealers use a lot of resources to process poor quality maize, which affects their output.

"Millers must ensure that they clean, sort and dry the maize which farmers supply. It becomes expensive for a miller to meet all the operational costs of all the stages," Kiiza said.

Kiiza said EAGC has been training leaders of different farmer groups in the country on how to handle grains, especially after harvesting.