

# Mukono, Masaka to plant Korean vegetables, fruits

WAKISO

By Prossy Nandudu

The National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and Korea Programme on International Agriculture (KOPIA) have embarked on a campaign of testing Korean vegetables and fruits on Ugandan soil to see whether they can adapt to the Ugandan environment.

Through the National Crop Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI), NARO will introduce tomatoes, cucumber and eggplants in the districts of Mukono, Masaka and Nakaseke in the first phase and then other parts of the country in the next phases.

The varieties from Korea have been undergoing trials at NaCRRI in Namulonge, Wakiso district for the last three years and researchers say the vegetables could do well in Ugandan soils.

The two-year project is being funded by the Korean government to the tune of \$50,000 (sh180m), starting this planting season. The month of April is said to be good for tomato growing.

This was revealed by Dr Idd Ramadhan from the vegetable unit, under the horticulture programme at NaCRRI on Thursday during a meeting with vegetable farmers from participating districts, project implementers and development partners.

He said carrying out farm trials was one of the requirements in seed production because it gives room for feedback from farmers and consumers. It also allows farmers to plant the vegetables, monitor, test them and recommend whether to adopt or reject them.

"Any feedback from farmers is recorded and if they accept the vegetables, the trial would have been considered successful. If



KOPIA directors and Namulonge researchers showing farmers grafted mangoes

## ON THE GROUND

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rejected, researchers return to the drawing board and research again," he added.

Ramadhan said they tested the varieties and found out that they could be grown in Uganda.

Once the vegetables are accepted by farmers, NaCRRI will apply to the agriculture ministry through the Variety Release Committee for approval to release the seeds officially in Uganda.

### When did testing start?

Trials on Korean vegetables started in 2015 and ended last year. Ramadhan said they collected several varieties of tomatoes, eggplants, kale (leaf cabbage) and cucumber. They tested and zeroed in on varieties that were tolerant to diseases and pests.

In the case of tomatoes, they grafted the Korean varieties with those from the Netherlands to get a disease-resistant breed.

"We tested the tomato breeds with consumers too, and then selected the best. Not only are they tolerant to pests and diseases, but they are also high-yielding varieties," Ramadhan said.

The director of the KOPIA centre in Kawanda, Dr Shim Hongsik, said the Korean vegetables project was aimed at increasing the consumption of vegetables by Ugandans.

"We finished the three-year project, selected six vegetables such as cabbage, kale, cucumber as well as tomatoes. This year we will carry out farm research on the three vegetables; tomatoes, eggplants and kale," Hongsik added.

## 'Redeploy UPDF on border'

Authorities in Namisindwa district have appealed to the Government to redeploy Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) detach along the Uganda-Kenya border at Lwakhakha to curb increasing cases of human trafficking and cross-border cattle theft. Namisindwa district security officials and councillors said the decision to remove UPDF from the Lwakhakha border crossing had done more harm than good. Namisindwa district commissioner Robert Mutemo said the district was grappling with increasing cases of human trafficking and cattle theft, adding that Police were overwhelmed. Mutemo said two suspected human traffickers were arrested and arraigned in court in Manafwa and said six others escaped and fled into an ordained racket with agents both in and Uganda.

## Army veterans demand council representation

Veterans from Toro sub-region have asked the ministries of defence and local government to ensure retired veterans are represented in local government councils. Presenting a memorandum on the veterans affairs state minister, E. Rwamirama, last week in Fort Portal, veterans said they should be considered as a special interest group such as youth, women and the elderly. Emma Abomugisha, the chairperson of Kalidistrict veterans, said they spend their youth working towards the peace of peace and stability for the country when they go back to their communities they find it difficult to reintegrate in society. "We also need special economic programmes like the youth and women that we can be empowered," Abomugisha said. He said several army veterans in the region were struggling to make a living they wait for their pension.