

US to support Uganda in agriculture

By Geoffrey Mutegeki

The agricultural sector has the potential to drive Uganda's economy to greater heights if the right investment in technology, international partnership and access to market is made, an American diplomat has said.

While touring Vision Group chief executive officer Robert Kabushenga's farm on Friday, Andrew Lentz, the counsellor for economic and political affairs at the American Embassy in Uganda, said: "What we are seeing here shows a lot of potential about Uganda's agricultural sector. With the right technology and access to market, there are a lot of opportunities in this country." The farm is located in Namayumba sub-county, Wakiso district.

Lentz encouraged farmers to invest in technologies like irrigation in order to get better returns even during the dry spell.

Lentz was in company of Hilbert Meg, the vice-president of the American Chamber of Commerce Uganda and other officials from the American embassy who included Omar Farooq (economic and commercial officer) and Stella Kasansula (economic and commercial assistant).

According to Meg, the American Embassy will ensure that US investors partner with Ugandans in developing the agricultural sector and the country at large.

"We can help Uganda with the kind of technology and expertise needed to unlock the opportunities to access the market, both locally and in the international market," Mega said.

Kabushenga's visitors revealed that



Kabushenga (second right) speaking to Farooq (left), Lentz (second left) and Stella Kasansula (right) at his farm in Namayumba on Friday. Photo by Geoffrey Mutegeki

in May, the US Embassy will hold an agricultural-trade mission, which will attract a number of American companies to seek ways of partnering with Ugandans in investing in the agricultural sector.

Kabushenga encouraged Ugandans practising farming to commit more

time to their farms for better results.

"The biggest mistake many farmers make is not giving time to their farms. You cannot know what is happening or needed on the farm if you do not have time to get involved in the activities physically," Kabushenga said.

Kabushenga's farm has two acres of bananas and two acres of coffee, with more projects in the pipeline.

He uses a solar-powered irrigation system, which enables him to produce bananas all year through. He fertilisers the farm using cow dung, avoiding the problem of counterfeit fertilisers in

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the process.

"This is the advantage I have against other farmers. Even in the dry spell, I can still produce good matooke and supply the market," he said.

"My target is to be an exporter of matooke. It is possible and I'm committed to achieving this," Kabushenga said.

In Uganda, agriculture employs over two thirds of the population, but is largely practised at subsistence level.

Farooq said if Ugandan farmers can work and invest in farming as a business, their dreams will be achieved.

"We want Ugandan entrepreneurs to get an idea about the American agri-business experience, through having partnership with American companies, which we shall try to do as the US mission," Farooq said.

He said Uganda is endowed with a good climate, fertile soils and other natural resources, which can usher in prosperity once the right practices and technology are applied.