

business

Daily Monitor

MONDAY,
FEBRUARY 29, 2016
www.monitor.co.ug

Africell rewards Valentine's promo subscribers. Africell Uganda has rewarded winners in the Valentine's Day Call and Win promotion with cash prizes. The promotion which was launched on February 7, ran up to February 14 and more than 144 subscribers won cash amounting to Shs20m. [Lawrence Ogwal, Monitor]



Claim. Bidco maintains land issues were handled by government.

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KAMPALA. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has broken silence over its deal with edible oil manufacturer Bidco Africa Ltd.

On Monday, Bugala Farmers Association petitioned the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the project's key financier, to cut links with the firm, saying it has defied court orders on land compensation. The farmers accuse Bidco of land grabbing.

"UNDP has received a petition from the Bugala Farmers Association in Uganda related to UNDP's association with Bidco Africa Ltd., as a result of the company's membership with the Business Call to Action (BCTA). The BCTA is an alliance of several donor and other institutions that challenges companies to use their core business to engage poor populations across their value chains, while contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition to the petition, a complaint was submitted to UNDP's Stakeholder Response Mechanism (SRM) and Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU). This request is currently being reviewed for eligibility for either or both channels the outcome of these reviews will be posted," reads UNDP a press statement.

"Bidco Africa Ltd became a member of the BCTA in September 2015. UNDP hosts the secretariat and is a member of the Donor Steering Committee of the BCTA," the statement further reads.

Govt role

In a letter addressed to banks, lawyers and international organisations, Bidco's chief executive Vimal Shah said the land on which its plantation stands was properly acquired by the Ugandan government.

"The government of Uganda is responsible for all land transactions,"

UNDP reacts to farmers petition against Bidco



Part of the land that has raised controversy between residents in Kalangala and Bidco, the edible oil producing company. FILE PHOTO

the company said in a letter seen by the *Business Daily*, a sister newspaper to *Daily Monitor*.

"Bidco is not a party to any land transaction. All stakeholders were involved in the land acquisition process and the transactions were on willing buyer willing seller basis. There was no compulsory acquisition of land."

Mr Shah acknowledged a dispute with "a small group of residents that is exaggerated and misrepresented."

He referred to a case where a landowner sold about 100 hectares of land for the project without shar-

THE PROJECT

The Kalangala Oil Palm Initiative is largely regarded as one of President Museveni's pet projects. It is being rolled out in a public private partnership model as Uganda government's vegetable oil development project. Its aim is to raise the country's vegetable oil production to export levels. The Kalangala Island-based Oil Palm Uganda Limited, a subsidiary of Bidco Africa, signed an agreement with the Uganda government in 2002 to take part as a private investor.

ing the information with about 20 tenants. "That case is in court and we will abide by the court decision," said Mr Shah.

Apart from private land, the Bugala Farmers Association has accused Bidco of grabbing forest reserve and causing environmental destruction in the Bugala Island of Lake Victoria.

On Tuesday, Bidco maintained that all the 13 forest reserves that Bugala Island had at the beginning of the project were still intact, adding that being a tree crop, the palm plantation has added the area's forest cover by 60 per cent.

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