



President Museveni flagging off a powdered milk consignment to Algeria. The Government is pushing for commercialisation of agriculture through agro-industrialisation

AGRO-INDUSTRIALISATION

BY VISION REPORTER

While the Government is pushing for agriculture commercialisation through the agro-industrialisation programme, access to quality seed will be paramount.

From quality seed, there will be high-yielding crops or animals needed for industrial use. The seed should be resilient to climate change and high-yielding, but should also address the tastes and preferences of the market.

To that effect, the National Agricultural Research Organisation has over time released new crop and livestock breeds to the public.

Released crop varieties include:

Crops: Under the crop sub-sector, four disease-resistant chipping potato varieties have been released. These include NAROPOT7, NAROPOT8, NAROPOT9 and NAROPOT10. According to researchers, the varieties are not only resilient to the effects of climate change, but also meet the interests of the market, the farmer and the processor.

OTHER CLIMATE-RESILIENT ANIMAL BREEDS

Through the relaunch of the Livestock Research Programme at the National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI), based in Serere district, researchers are introducing approximately 230 head of cattle to further promote livestock research and farming in the region.

Of these, some are climate-resilient, such as the local Zebu cow, also known as the East African Zebu, which is hardy and can adapt to harsh

weather conditions including heat, disease and poor nutrition.

The second breed is the Sahiwal from India, which also adapts to the region's semi-arid conditions. Other benefits include good milk yields and beef production.

The Borana, found in Kenya mainly among the Turkana community, can also adapt to Uganda's semi-arid regions and can survive on poor-quality grass.

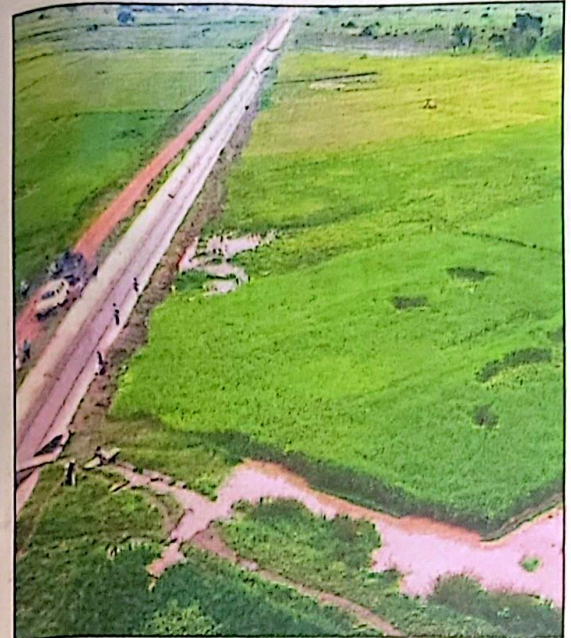
Attributes in potatoes that processors want include high dry matter, uniform size and crisping quality. On the other hand, farmers want varieties that are disease-resistant and high-

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Operators, technicians and mechanics trained to use farm machinery.

yielding, with a shorter maturity period. In terms of Uganda's economy, these have been bred to reduce imports so as to strengthen agro-industrialisation.

Bananas: Researchers also released a new banana variety, NAROBAN6, that is resistant to common diseases. NAROBAN6, whose average weight is between 45-54kg, yields 44 tonnes per hectare per year. The banana is tolerant to nematodes, banana weevils, fusarium wilt and black sigatoka diseases. It can stay



Rice fields at Acomal. The project is one of the programmes run by the agriculture ministry in Bukedea

KEY ON THE AGENDA

in the plantation for more than 10 years, depending on management.

Other crops include three finger millet varieties that are high in iron and zinc, supplemented by foxtail millet, a protein-rich and iron-dense cereal crop that is early-maturing and drought-resistant.

Foxtail millet was introduced to Uganda through the FAO-China-Uganda South-South co-operation project. It is aimed at improving food and nutrition security in most parts of the country.

Examples of foxtail millet varieties introduced include NAROFOMILL 1,

which matures within 80-85 days.

It has a higher protein content of between 11.9g per 100g, iron at 25.1 mg/kg and zinc at 15.9mg/kg. Upon planting, the average yield is up to 1.8 metric tonnes per hectare.

NAROFOMILL 2 matures within 75-80 days, with a protein content of 11.72g/100g, iron at 21.28mg/kg, zinc at 17.55 mg/kg and a potential yield of 1.8 t/ha.

NAROFOMILL 3 matures within 85-90 days, has the same nutritional content as the above two, but with iron at 16.7 mg/kg, zinc at 13.2 mg/kg and yields 1.7 t/ha.



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LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY BREEDS

Indigenous chicken has also been improved to attain a market weight of 2.5kg within six months. Goats: the F1 Kalahari-Mubende cross reaches 20kg in seven months, compared to 30kg for the Mubende at 18 months.

Beef cattle: the F1 Ankole-Brahman cross reaches 156kg, compared to 90kg for pure Ankole in six months.

Other breeding initiatives have yielded better breeding and stocking results, particularly in cattle, where the Ankole-Brahman crosses reached a weight of 156kg compared to 90kg in pure Ankole in six months.