

Masindi grain farmers ask for more storage facilities

MASINDI

By Priscillar Nyamahunge

Grain farmers and dealers in Masindi district have called on the Government and relevant authorities to construct more warehouses at parish level to help in the storage of their grain.

Farmers are complaining that most of their grain gets destroyed during harvests, especially during the wet season.

Grain producing sub-counties in Masindi include Pakanyi, Bwijanga and Mirya.

Simon Onadra, a farmer in Kyangamwoyo village, Pakanyi sub-county, said most of the farmers look on as their maize grain is destroyed either by poor storage or unpredictable rains.

"Few farmers have stores. Some spread the maize on the floors of their houses, yet that affects its moisture content," Onadra said.

Masindi has two maize grain warehouses – Joseph Initiative, located about 30km from the town and Masindi Seed and Grain Growers Limited, which is in Masindi town.

Job Kaheru, another farmer in Pakanyi, said farmers are not allowed to dry maize grain on the ground because this affects the quality, yet most of them lack the necessary drying facilities.

In June, Masindi district passed a production ordinance to increase the production of the major staple food crops such as maize and to ensure sustainable agricultural



Onadra at his maize storage facility. Photos by Priscillar Nyamahunge

WHAT THEY SAY



Emmanuel Mugisa
Having warehouses in all parishes will help farmers cut transport costs.



Joseph Komwiswa
We need machinery to work on big fields and reduce losses during harvests.

practices. One of the clauses provides that every household must have famine-reserve crops and a well-

constructed storage facility, such as a granary or crib.

However, some farmers say they cannot afford to construct the

granaries and cribs. "The Government has put the emphasis on supplying seeds, but does not say much about helping farmers to get storage facilities," Kaheru said.

When contacted, Pausta Nuwagaba, a programme officer at Eastern Africa Grain Council, said farmers can make use of Village Aggregation Centres (VACs) as an alternative for warehouses. He said Masindi has a VAC in Kihaguzi, Pakanyi sub-county.

Kassim Kabagonza, the district secretary for production, said the Government needs to revive co-operatives in order to promote group marketing and give a voice to the farmers to lobby for such services.