

250 to lose jobs over closure of Tororo donkey meat factory

Reason. Government says the factory was established without following the right procedures

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TORORO. More than 250 people are at risk of losing their jobs after the Ministry of Agriculture ordered for the closure of a newly-established donkey meat processing and packing factory in Tororo District.

The permanent secretary of ministry of Agriculture, Mr Pius Wakabi Kasajja, and the team from the district at the weekend closed Haung Cheng Uganda Limited factory, saying it was established without following the right procedures.

The company established in April was exporting meat and donkey products to Vietnam.

Residents, too, claim the investor had failed to meet the minimum health standards of disposing of donkey off cuts.

2,000

NUMBER OF DONKEYS THAT THE COMPANY IS ALLEGEDLY STUCK WITH

But the Tororo Resident District Commissioner, Mr Martin Orochi, has opposed the closure of the factory saying it was uncalled for and it threatens the relationship of the country with the investors.

Mr Oroch instead said it would be a wise decision if the ministry officials engaged the investor on how to legalise the operations of the company.

"It is the ministry of Agriculture that granted the investors permission to go ahead and establish a factory including giving



Closed. Donkeys being taken to the grazing field in Tororo District. The ministry of Agriculture has ordered the closure of a newly established donkey meat processing and packing factory. FILE PHOTO

ing it an operational licence. I don't see any reason why they closed it," he said.

He added that closing the factory rendered many employees and the businessmen who have

been supplying the donkeys jobless. But Mr Kasajja, however, defended that it was a government position and that he expected no government official to oppose it. "We are not

doing this to please ourselves but we are following government policy framework, where government has a duty to regulate trade," he said.

He said the ministry was not aware of the investor establishing a donkey meat processing facility in the area not until they started receiving complaints on the increasing theft of donkeys from north eastern Uganda and the neighboring north western parts of Kenya. When contacted about the matter, the Haung Cheng Uganda limited manager, Mr Wang Mandu, said they were in the process of formalising their business as well as fixing all the requirements that National Environment Man-

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agement Authority had recommended.

He said they are stuck with 100 tons of processed meat and skins, and more than 2,000 donkeys in stock.

"We are frustrated now because we were in the process of legalising our business," he said

Poor disposal

The acting Tororo District chairperson, Ms Stella Imukutet, said the operation of the factory was posing a health hazard to the neighboring communities due to poor disposal of the animal remnants.

However, the employees at the factory have threatened to demonstrate over the closure.

"The government should look for us an alternative way to earn a living," Mr Fred Okware, one of the employees, said.