



anana bunch at the presidential Kawumu, Luwero, on Wednesday.

How drip irrigation is

BY JOHN SEMAKULA

When President Yoweri Museveni returned to Kawumu in Luwero district on Wednesday to harvest his crops, dozens of invited visitors stormed the area to take a glance of his harvest.

Clad in a white clean floral gomesi, Nasintziya Nabukoga, 90, was among the visitors who trooped from their homes to meet the President.

Nabukoga said she had gone to ask the President for a cash favour.

"The last time I met the President here, he gave me sh1m in an envelope, which I used to buy food," she said, adding, "When I heard that he was back, I returned for some more."

The soldiers asked Nabukoga to return in the evening when the President would meet his visitors. But when the President started his field tours among model farmers in the afternoon, she got a chance to see him. When his convoy reached her house, she waved him to stop.

Noticing her at a close distance, the President's

out. After shaking hands with her, Nabukoga narrated to the President that she used to deliver food to his rebel fighters in the early 1980s, until government soldiers captured and beat her up.

After listening to her story, Museveni asked his body guard for an envelope containing an unidentified sum of cash, and he handed over to her.

He also asked the State House comptroller, Lucy Nakvobe, to fix the old woman's shaky house. When the President left, she said he had sent her into early Easter celebrations.

The assistance President Museveni gave Nabukoga left locals talking about how he cares a lot for the elderly. But the President's trip was not about handing out envelopes to the needy, but something bigger that can help people sustain their incomes without having to wait for handouts for him.

■ Museveni changing Luwero

In 2017, President Museveni says he set up model demonstration farms at Kawumu to teach locals how to make money through

PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI said: "Poverty is ignorance. Since some people were not listening to me, I came to Kawumu to show them that I can use four acres of land and generate a lot of money."

agriculture. As soon as he bought the piece of land where the farm is located, locals started celebrating. Electricity, which had eluded the area, was extended within days.

Locals started tapping power and expanding their businesses. Shop owners also sold cold drinks, such as soda and water, while others could now easily charge their mobile phones.

He has also promised to continue extending electricity to different homesteads where it is used to pump water for irrigation and feeding animals on some farms.

Some locals, especially members of the families of the former National Resistance Army fighters of Museveni, have also got permanent houses built for them, courtesy of the President. The move is slowly changing the structures of an area which was once

destroyed by battles between rebel fighters and government forces in the 1980s. Apart from a few people, heed the President's advice to join agriculture, most families are already reaping big.

■ Drip irrigation

Last year, when he was launching the demonstration farms, Museveni said he wanted to liberate the people of Luwero, where his war was majorly fought.

At the time he went to the area, the prolonged dry spell had ravaged farms and farmers had registered losses.

It was at that point that Museveni adopted the model which his detractors mocked, saying the technology was outdated. Museveni also showed

■ Farmers sing praises for Museveni

Denis Kasi, one of the model farmers Museveni visited, said not until he opened up the demonstration farms and his eyes about farming, he had only focused on his

turning Luwero into a food basket

his model garden of passion fruits that brings in sh200,000 per week and yet grown on a small piece of land (less than a half an acre). But this week, he proved them wrong when he

paraded his 4,000kgs of fish ready for sell. The fish, estimated at sh32m was reared in two ponds on less than half an acre and within only nine months.

The President also owns gardens of bananas, pineapples and Robusta coffee that flowered within 12 months, instead of 16 months because of property care.

"Balibaseka," he said, "Let them see how far we have gone so far."

The 438 chicken layers on Museveni's farm also bring in sh53m per year, considering that he earns about sh90,000 per day.

The President said his model farms are enough proof that Ugandans are poor because of their mentality.

former job at Owino Market, where he sold second-hand clothes.

"But after learning about modern agricultural methods through the Poverty Alleviation Department (PAD) of State House at Kawumu, we embarked on expanding our farms," Kasi said.

Today, Kasi has dozens of pigs, 1,000 layers, one acre of tomatoes, pigs, goats and cows, he is looking forward to expanding the farm.

The new buildings the family has set up to expand their chicken farms to over 3,000 wowed the President.

Reacting to what he saw at the farm, Museveni ordered State House to give Kasi more chicken and three more modern cows.

"I am pleased with your work and since the bible says that the one who has will be added, I direct Nakyobe to give you more and more," Museveni said.

The President visited more model farmers who included Hajati Safina Namusi who gave a water pump to take care of her cows and Peter Kintu a prominent pig farmer.

Kintu told the President that he was working at Bwaise market in Kampala and that when the President camped



Passion fruits at the presidential demonstration farm in Kawumu in Luwero

at Kawumu, they followed him, after hearing he helps farmers.

The Kintus have a pig farm that also drew the attention of the President, considering the quality and good hygiene in their pigsty.

■ "Why I emphasise modern farming"

Museveni said his emphasis on commercialisation of agriculture is one of the four

principles of the National Resistance Movement, which is socio-economic transformation.

He said to achieve socio-economic transformation, people should get out of the traditional ways, where they produce food only for home consumption.

Museveni said 52 years ago, he began pointing out to the Banyankole the need to change from traditional

cattle keeping to commercial farming, in order to get rich. "One of the local chiefs who opposed my idea asked me to look at his fingers and see whether they were the same," he said.

He added that other people said the Bahima could not change from their traditional ways of living and that they needed to be left the way they were.

"I started with them from 1967 to the time when Amin came and went to fight him," Museveni said between 1989 and 1995, he went back and discovered that all the villages can get out of the poverty. "Poverty is ignorance since some people were not listening to me, I came to Kawumu to show them that I can use four acres of land and generate a lot of money," he added.

Citing the Bible, Museveni said: "When a nation has no vision, it perishes." He also noted that the problem of low productivity of food in Africa is being asleep.

"There is no way, for example, why Ugandans with all this fertile soils should not have enough food and Israel, which grows crops in the desert, has plenty that it can even export."

■ Evidence of Museveni's effort in farmers' gardens

Out of the need to empower farmers in Kawumu, during the field visits, Museveni also donated sh10m to a farmers' model SACCOS with 138 members. Like the demonstration farms he set up, he inspired the local farmers to start the SACCOS to help themselves in case of emergencies that need cash.

The SACCOS started last year, with each member paying sh15,000 as membership fees. Members are also allowed to save as low as sh1,000 after paying membership.

Moses Wiriwiri, a field officer at Kawumu village, said when farmers sell their produce, they are encouraged to save part of their income with the SACCOS such that if their animals are sick, they can go for financial help.

For the model farmers that Museveni visited, there was clear evidence that his agricultural programmes are impacting the lives of the local farmers.

Lydia Balemezi, the special presidential assistant in charge of projects, said they were doing a lot to ensure that farmers embrace commercial farming.