

Karamoja registers initial harvest as rain takes break

MOROTO

By Olandason Wanyama

A break in the rains has enabled farmers in Karamoja sub-region to start harvesting some food crops. Sorghum, millet, sim-sim and sunflower are among the crops whose harvest was delayed due to unrelenting rains.

However, in Moroto district, areas of Rupa, Tapac, Katikeikile and parts of Nadunget sub-counties that experienced drier conditions lost most of the crops for the first planting season, as a dry spell swept through the district in May and June.

Naru Ang'ironya, a mother of five and resident of Lodoi village, Komaret parish in Nadunget sub-county, attributes the loss to the dry spell.

"There was a dry spell mid this year that hit my village a few weeks after the planting season," she said.

Ang'ironya explained that during the recent dry spell, she survived on borrowing money to feed the family.

Highly indebted

"I have tried to pay back the debts but failed. I had placed hope in the crops to help me pay up but the weather has been unfriendly," she explained.

A mini survey carried out by the *New Vision* indicated dozens of villages that planted late June amid scanty rains will benefit from the moderate harvest in Moroto.

Some of the areas include Loputuk and Nabuin parishes, and some parts of Naitakwae, Nakamisitae villages. The other areas are those areas that lie along the Moroto-Soroti road.

Martin Odongo, an elderly farmer, asked government to think of establishing irrigation schemes in Karamoja.

"Without these interventions, the



A Karimojong woman chews a sorghum stem after harvesting

region will not be food-secure," he observed. Odongo said the scenario of poor harvest would continue as long as "we do not have proper weather forecasts".

"I managed to plant crops twice but the dry spell destroyed them," he added.

In Nakapiripirit district, available information indicates a below-average harvest. The district

production officer, Mario Tengei, said Namalu sub-county – the district's food basket – was recently hit by seasonal floods.

"Most of the sorghum and maize were swept away by floods in the east of Namalu," he noted, adding that earlier, most gardens were disturbed by fall armyworm that left a trail of destruction.

Tengei said in Nakapiripirit town

BETWEEN THE LINES

Climate experts recently predicted that rains are expected to continue until December. The experts also advised Ugandans to look out for planting seasons as there was likely to be a break in the rainy season.

council, River Diyok swept away all the harvested maize left in the gardens to dry, indicating that the stream burst over 30 metres on either side.

He, however, said the district will experience isolated crop harvests, rendering several households food insecure.

Situation in Abim

The district agricultural officer of Abim, Leo Omona, described the harvest as below normal.

He said farmers harvested less maize compared to last year, attributing the matter to fall armyworms that devastated most of the gardens.

However, Omona said 95% of the farmers had harvested a lot of sim-sim in the past weeks.

"This time around sim-sim will sustain most households in the district," he said.

Omona further said farmers had also received moderate pigeon peas, cassava and sweet potatoes, rendering most homes food secure.

Finally, Napak district is headed for a bumper harvest following reliable rains in the past months.

According to John Lodungokol, the production officer, this time around most households are food secure after successive crop failure of four consecutive years.

He, however, cautioned them against selling the harvests so as to ensure their families live sustainably. He said seasons were unpredictable these days.