

Farmers tipped on curbing land degradation in hilly areas

By Juliet Kasirye

A total of 18,430 farmers have acquired skills to promote Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in an effort to fight land degradation in hilly areas across the country.

The SLM project is being implemented by Zonal Agriculture Research and Development Institutes (ZARDIs) in 37 districts, in order to ensure the enhancement of land productivity, food security and to improve resilience of communities and landscapes to climate shocks.

The districts where the project is to be implemented include Rukungiri, Kabale, Kisoro, Kanungu, Rubanda, Manafwa, Mbale, Bududa, Bulambuli, Isingiro, Mbarara, Nyarushozi, Mukono, Mubende, Masaka, Gomba, Kamwenge, Kabarole and Bundibugyo. Others are Kasese, Kyenjojo, Kiryandongo, Masindi, Kagadi, Hoima, Buliisa, Nebbi, Zombo, Bukedea, Soroti, Nakapiripirit, Kotido, Lira, Alebtong, Nwoya, Otuke and Amuru.

Steven Muwaya, the programme director in the agriculture ministry,



An aerial view of Kyokyezo landscape in Kabale district. Farmers visited the hill to get hands-on skills on land degradation in hilly areas. Photo by Juliet Kasirye

said the SLM project is covering the entire country and it is already being implemented in all the ZARDIs.

“Under each area, our objective is to address the challenge of land degradation and also to increase the

resilience of agricultural landscapes to climate change,” Muwaya explained.

He also said the project promotes soil and water conservation technologies, structures and promotes the approach of managing landscapes.

“Besides that, we also look at how best people can improve their productivity within their environment,” he added.

Muwaya added that the project equips farmers with skills about SLM technologies and practices. These include soil and water conservation bunds, conservation agriculture, small-scale irrigation, water harvesting, agronomic practices.

In addition, Muwaya explained: “The project also rehabilitates degraded areas and promotes agro-forestry, which in a way helps farmers to integrate trees within agricultural landscapes. So far, we have rehabilitated more than 10,000 trees in the various ZARDIs and we are looking forward to doing a lot more.”

Recently, during the inter-farmer learning visit at Kyokyezo landscape in Kabale district and Kijojo B village

in Mbarara district, farmers from different agricultural zonal institutes witnessed how farming in hilly areas has tremendously improved productivity of different households among farmers.

James Kaboole, a farmer from Khabutoola sub-county in Manafwa district, said: “The exercise has changed my mindset. With the knowledge I have acquired now, I will to plant eucalyptus trees on my land found on the hill instead of leaving the land idle.”

Teopista Tusiime, a farmer at Rugashali sub-county in Kagadi district, revealed that after the crops were washed away by soil erosion, she had decided to plant bananas again on the hill. However, after learning new skills in looking after the banana plantation, she promised to apply the same knowledge in order to improve her productivity.

The implementation of the project is spearheaded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and the National Agriculture Research Organisations, with support from the World Bank.