

ADUMA SAID STRIGA WAS NOT ON THE LIST OF NARCOTICS, HENCE IT WAS DIFFICULT TO PROSECUTE SMOKERS

Ban smoking of striga weed, says Kamuli CAO

KAMULI

By Paul Kiwuwa

The Kamuli district deputy chief administrative officer (CAO), Godfrey Aduma, has asked the parliamentary committee on agriculture to ban the smoking of the striga weed.

Striga, also known as witchweed, is a parasitic weed that bears purple flowers.

The weed, which survives by siphoning water and nutrients from its hosts, severely hampers the productivity of crops, such as maize, groundnuts, sorghum and millet.

Aduma told the MPs last Friday that some youth mix tobacco with dry striga leaves and flowers, to form an inebriating concoction.

He said the concoction intoxicates them, which he believes is the reason behind increase in crime in the region.

"Over 200 drug-related cases have been registered at Bugembe Police Station, since the beginning of the year," he said.

"Striga is not on the list of banned narcotics in the country. It is difficult to prosecute people smoking it. We implore you to ensure that smoking striga is outlawed.



Robert Migadde (left), showing other members of the parliamentary committee on agriculture, a maize crop affected by the striga weed in Iganga, on Saturday. Photo by Paul Kiwuwa

The Iganga district senior agricultural officer, Wilberforce Tibairira, said the weed could be dangerous to people, considering that it causes serious damage to host crops

by producing harmful toxins.

"The nutrients of the host plant's are depleted as the plant supports the parasitic striga. Damage is severe under conditions of low rainfall and

poor soil fertility," Tibairira said.

"Smoking of striga is common in peri-urban areas of Kamuli, Iganga, Bugiri, Mayuge, Jinja, Luuka and Kaliro," he said. Other areas are Idudi,



The deadly striga weed that is said to be smoked in Busoga

Busembatia, Bugembe and Kasambira town councils.

The committee vice-chairperson, Robert Migadde Ndugwa (MP Buvuma County), said local governments in Busoga region should pass bylaws to stop the smoking of the deadly weed.

During their tour, the committee members found over 200 acres of maize infested by the weed. However, they learnt that farmers who use striga-tolerant maize seeds are not affected by the weed.

Current interventions

Sharon Muhwezi, an analyst with One Acre Fund, a non-profit organisation serving smallholder farmers in Busoga region, said there were no approved pesticides for controlling striga, the reason the government should intervene.

She said uprooted striga plants should be burned to prevent the weed from spreading to other farms.



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