

Lira farmers choose their preferred maize varieties

LIRA

By Christopher Bendana

Farmers in Akuriwo and Anyom Orem villages in Ngetta sub-county, in Lira district have chosen WE 2114 as their preferred maize variety.

The farmers gave their verdict during a Farmer's Field Day at Ngetta Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (NZARDI) on Friday.

A variety of the Tego series, the drought-tolerant maize varieties was bred by the Cereal Programme of the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) in Namulonge, Wakiso district and it does yield even under dry conditions.

Dr Godfrey Asea, a maize breeder and the director of NaCRRI, said the variety is one of those bred to help in militating climate change as it can withstand drought.

He revealed that the variety can yield up to eight tones/hectare during favourable conditions. He said it can yield up to six tonnes/hectares in unfavourable dry condition, compared to less than two

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tonnes/hectare for the local varieties.

He said seeds can be brought from Otis Garden Seeds in Lira town.

Walter Adea, a farmer from Okide quarters in Akuriwo, said he prefers the variety because it is drought-tolerant, pest-resistant and provides higher yields in dry conditions, compared to available hybrids, such as UH5051, a variety that was also under trial in the same field with WE2114.

Ben Acwera, another farmer from Akuriwo village, said he preferred WE 2114 because of the longer size of the cob and the many grains it has.

Dr Grace Abalo, a deployment

lead officer with NaCRRI, said they hold such field days to help farmers make informed choices on which variety to grow.

She added that farmers' feedback on such days helps the scientists decides which variety to increase by way of seed production and which one to discard.

The field day that brought in 150 farmers involved evaluation of 19 Tego maize varieties and one hybrid.

The farmers were also trained in basic maize growing. They were advised to buy seeds from certified seed companies and plant the right amount of seeds. Abalo recommended a 75cm/25cm spacing for each seed.

She also advised them to apply fertilisers after weeding, to avoid weeds consuming the fertiliser.

Farmers also made preferred choices on varieties that are still under trial.

Janet Akello, a farmer from Akuriwo, chose US 5117. She said the variety had few rotten cobs and the grain occupied the whole cob, making it difficult for birds to prey on.