

Farmer loses fish harvest

MBALE

By Joseph Wanzusi

A Mbale-based retired civil servant and fish farmer, Peter Walulu and his son, Gerald Walulu, a resident of Buwalasi cell, Nabuyonga ward in Mbale municipality began the new year on a sad note after finding hundreds of fish dead in their pond.

On Saturday morning, when the duo went to feed the over 3,000 African tilapia fish that they had been rearing since May last year, they were shocked to find them dead.

Walulu said at the beginning of last year he spent over sh2.5m on excavating a fish pond near his residence before stocking it with tilapia fingerlings he bought from Kajjansi Fish Breeding Centre near Kampala.

"We suspected poisoning by unknown people, but a fisheries officer we talked to said depletion of oxygen may have caused the disaster," Walulu said.

He told *New Vision* that the family decided to venture into fish farming on the limited piece of land after being inspired by stories they have been reading in *New Vision's Harvest Money* pull-out and President Yoweri Museveni's advice on income-generation through agriculture. The family had expected to earn about sh30m from the fish.

Walulu said they opted to rear tilapia fish because it had a ready market, although the cost of feeds was high. He added that their dream is to



Walulu points at the stock of dead fish in the pond. Experts believe the fish died due to overstocking the pond. Photo by Joseph Wanzusi

serve as urban model fish farmers in Mbale town.

A retired Mbale district fisheries officer, Francis Walyamboga, said the disaster may have been caused by overstocking the pond that led to the depletion of oxygen as a result of faecal matter on the pond's bottom.

He said the pond could handle at least 1,800 fingerlings instead of the 3,000 it had.

"A fish pond that does not

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Retired fisheries officer

drain loses oxygen, making the fish choke on carbon dioxide because the water becomes contaminated and, therefore, cannot sustain aquatic life," Walyamboga said.

Walulu and his family members hope the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) through Operation Wealth Creation will come to their rescue and provide them with fish fingerlings.

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