

**BIG BOOST**

*Museveni pledged to support the enterprise with a water pumping system to enable them irrigate the coffee shamba and sh80m*

By Chris Mugasha

President Yoweri Museveni has urged women to stop fuelling land fragmentation in families. Museveni said when a man gets married, the wife starts to influence him to demand his share from the man's parents so that they can become independent, which results in land fragmentation.

"Did you come for marriage or you came to look for property?" Museveni asked. He said on dividing the land, each household digs its own latrine and drying ground.

"What do you benefit from having several latrines scattered around the homestead?" Museveni asked.

Museveni described land fragmentation as darkness, ignorance and lack of vision. He was on Saturday visiting Bushenyi Wet Coffee Processors Factory in Kanyamatambara, Kyagyenyi sub-county in Sheema district.

The factory is an initiative of Jack Bigirwa and his wife, Bernadette, both deceased. The family had also established about 20 acres of Robusta coffee, which are all under the management of the children, led by Bernard Bigirwa. The factory is also fed by 3,526 outgrowers. Museveni pledged to support the enterprise with a water pumping system to enable them irrigate the coffee shamba and sh80m, of which he handed over sh20m.

**Good stewardship**

Museveni hailed Bigirwa's children for sustaining their parents' coffee business, adding value and supporting the community, unlike some children who he blamed for causing the collapse of their parents' businesses after their (parents) death. "After their parents' death, the Bigirwa children did not divide the land into pieces. Instead, they have used their education to add onto it. Thank you for being loyal to your parents and giving them credit even when they are not here," he said.

Museveni reiterated his appeal to families to form family companies or co-operatives, get shares, utilise the family land jointly and share what accrues from the sales at the end of the harvest.

Museveni asked the leaders to intensify sensitisation of people on the dangers of land fragmentation. "Land fragmentation increases poverty," he stressed.

According to Bernard, after their parents' death, they chose to move forward together. He said they harvest about 70 tonnes of red cherries every season. "Let us produce speciality coffee because we have the best robusta coffee, which is pre-booked by exporters around the world and so it is a clear tax winner for the Government," he advised.

He said they have used the money earned from exports to transform the lives of coffee farmers.

Bernard said they would have doubled the production had it not been the effects of climate change and lack of funding to purchase fertilisers. "Government's agriculture funding is there, but accessing it

**RECLAIMING WETLANDS**

*Museveni disclosed that the Government has set aside a fund to compensate those who reclaimed wetlands*



Museveni, accompanied by Bernard Bigirwa, touring Bushenyi Wet Coffee Processors Factory in Sheema on Saturday. PPU photo

# Museveni cautions women against land fragmentation



Museveni with the Bigirwas in their export coffee store at Bushenyi Wet coffee processors factory. Photo by Chris Mugasha

is like treating cancer. You have put credit lines in banks, but a farmer accessing these funds is like going to heaven," added Cyprian Bangirana, the chairperson of coffee farmers in the district. Bangirana said a lot of water is required in processing wet coffee, yet water sources have dried up.

The Sheema North MP, who is also the science and technology minister, Dr Elioda Tumwesigye, reported that major water sources in the area had dried up. Tumwesigye attributed the water scarcity to the planting of eucalyptus trees in wetlands.

"The rich people have bought off people's land, only to plant there eucalyptus trees to the extent of planting in wetlands," Tumwesigye said.

He asked the Government to evict people from wetlands and enter into negotiations with those who reclaimed them (wetlands) many years ago so that they can be compensated and vacate them for regeneration. He, however, said people

in the area are likely to mobilise themselves to force whoever has encroached on the wetland to leave.

Tumwesigye appealed to the President to support allocation of money to agriculture so that dams are constructed to enable farmers irrigate their crops.

"The manufacture of solar pumps should be intensified so that we give them to farmers," Tumwesigye said. He called for cultivation of quick-maturing crops such as beans, maize and cassava. "It will be a shame to invite you (Museveni) here to give people food handouts," Tumwesigye noted.

Earlier, the district councillor for Kyagyenyi sub-county, Viann Muhwezi, requested the Government to promote planting of trees on bare hills and also force people who have planted eucalyptus trees in wetlands to uproot them.

Muhwezi wondered why the Government had

failed to implement the banning of polythene bags.

**Museveni response**

Responding to concerns on issues of climate change, Museveni reiterated his directive for people to vacate wetlands. "Agriculture now needs water for irrigation," he said.

He said it was unfortunate to find that districts such as Kanungu and Rukungiri are hit by famine, yet they are endowed with fertile soils.

Museveni said it is unconceivable for places such as Mbarara to run out of water, which he attributed to the drying up of River Rwizi. "Can you imagine we are going to look for water from River Kagera for the people of Mbarara?"

He castigated people who have encroached on wetlands, saying they have opposed God's creation. He warned that: "Even in the Bible; people would get punished for disobeying God."

Museveni supported the idea of uprooting eucalyptus trees which have been planted in wetlands. He asked the forestry officers at districts to advise people about the species of trees which are water-friendly.

Museveni disclosed that the Government has set aside a fund to compensate those who reclaimed wetlands many years ago and turned them into farms. "They did it because of ignorance because wetlands are granaries of water."

"The issue of destroying wetlands, rivers must stop and hills be protected through the planting of trees, because they act as tunnels," he said.

Museveni said through Makerere University, the Government is committed to promoting solar water pumps to help farmers.