

By Brian Ssenoga

Friends of bees especially the farmers have all reasons to panic after it has been discovered that the honey making insect could be headed to extinction.

According to the latest research, there are only two bee races in Uganda contrary to earlier reports which claimed three bee races of the species *Apis mellifera*.

The latest publication on molecular characterisation of honeybee races (*Apis mellifera*) in Uganda, conducted by the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), demonstrates the presence of only two honey bee races in Uganda; *Apis mellifera Adansonii* and *Apis mellifera Scutellata*. "Both the population structure and the phylogenetic analyses reveal the presence of only two honey bee races *Adansonii* and *Scutellata*, while earlier studies done in Uganda claimed presence of three races," said Dr Patrice Kasangaki, head apiculture research at NARO.

He was speaking at the sidelines of

the NARO Competitive Grants Scheme workshop to focus on developing innovative tools and technologies for increased beekeeping productivity in Uganda at Kabanyolo.

Researchers observed high diversity within a majority of the agro-ecological zones except the Southern Highland agro-ecological zone.

*Apis mellifera Adansonii* is widespread in the agro-ecological zones in the northern and eastern parts of Uganda while *Apis mellifera Scutellata* is more spread in the southern and western parts of the country.

However, Dr Robert Kajobe noted, "the bees are actually getting extinct. If earlier studies suggested the presence of *Monticola* and then we cannot see it 10 years later, we should all be worried for our food sector."

Honey bees are considered the most effective pollinators contributing to about 75 per cent of food security hence any threat to the bees directly translates to food insecurity.