

THE REGIONAL MECHANISATION CENTRES ARE MEANT FOR THE MODERNISATION OF AGRICULTURE

By Henry Sekanjako

The Government is set to establish regional mechanisation centres for modernisation of the agricultural sector and improved food production.

Appearing before the parliamentary committee on agriculture yesterday to present the agricultural sector budget for the financial year 2018/19, Vincent Ssempijja, the Minister for Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries said the centres will be equipped with tractors and maintenance tools/workshops.

"The regional mechanisation centres will work in close partnership with the ministry of agriculture mechanisation department and will be responsible for construction of water for agriculture production and infrastructure in different regions," Ssempijja said.

According to Ssempijja, the centres will have one mechanical engineer, one irrigation engineer and one civil engineer.

He noted that the centres will also back-up and build the capacity of district engineers to ensure effective and efficient utilisation of district mechanical equipment.

"These centres will be responsible for maintaining government tractors and repair or maintenance of used tractors in

Govt to establish regional mechanisation centres



(Left to right) Beatrice Byarugaba, the director agriculture extension services in the agriculture ministry, Pius Wakabi Kasajja, the ministry's permanent secretary and Vincent Ssempijja, the agriculture minister before MPs yesterday

basis," he said.

Planned for the financial year 2018/19, Ssempijja said the establishment of the regional mechanisation centres will

over a period of three years, beginning with western and northern regions.

Ssempijja told the MPs that the ministry will train 200 tractor operators from

Namalere to close the capacity gap that exists in the agriculture sector.

Project outline

The ministry will commence

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Ssempijja said each centre will require at least 10 tractors, recruitment and financing the preparations of four engineers.

with two regional mechanisation centres in 2018/19.

According to Ssempijja, establishment of each centre will require at least 10 tractors, recruitment and financing the preparations of four engineers.

The Government also plans to purchase heavy moving equipment, each comprising of a bulldozer, grader, excavator, water bowser, tipper, low bed and tipper truck, which will be used for regional irrigation infrastructure, bush clearance and opening of farmer access roads.

Before establishment, the Government will also require a set of mobile workshop, refurbishing existing

workshops, and four pickup vehicles for the engineers.

"The mobile workshops will provide support for maintenance of the tractor fleet purchased by the Ministry of Agriculture agencies in the last three financial years and those of the private sector on concessional terms. Tractors will be maintained wherever they are located in various parts of the country," Ssempijja said.

The committee, chaired by Pader district Woman MP Lowila Oketayot, commended the ministry for the planned mechanisation of agriculture in the country.

According to Oketayot, the committee will push for provision of more funds to the ministry for the establishment of the regional mechanisation centres.

"We plan to push for more funds for this particular budget line, when we appear before the budget committee. If there are no funds, we shall advise the ministry to start with one regional centre so that it is fully equipped," Oketayot told *New Vision* yesterday.

Out of the sh15.44b required for the implementation of the project during the financial 2018/19, the ministry has been allocated only sh3b to kick-start the project, creating a financial gap of sh12.44b. The ministry is seeking approval of sh831.66b for the financial year 2018/19.