

Monitor Farm Clinic breaks new grounds in agribusiness

Learnt. Paul Watsosi from Lusaze was delighted to learn the art of intercropping and preparing a farm.

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KAMPALA. The quest for agribusiness knowledge was in full gear at the Monitor Farm Clinic last Saturday at Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute Kabanyolo.

Experienced farmers, rookies and dignitaries thronged the clinic as early as 8.am to participate in the refreshing agricultural seminars that had practical lectures in five enterprises; piggery, passion fruits, bananas, dairy and coffee.

"The turn up was impressive like we had anticipated. Participants showed the zeal to learn and the facilitators gave it their all," Dr Stephen Lwasa, the host and Farming Economics facilitator said.

"The clinic had a political outlook and many farmers gained practical skills. They listened attentively and asked questions in the plenary sessions," he added.

Dr Lwasa advised the farmers to start implementing what they had acquired at the day-long seminar right away.

To Prof David Mutetika, who handled the piggery enterprise, it is now incumbent upon the government to help the farmers.

"The main challenge we explored was how to make animal feeds whose prices keep on fluctuating in the market. Government should check on the imported feeds sold to farmers. As we continue to interact with the farmers, the forces-that-be must also improve the environment they work in," Prof Mutetika said.



Trained. Participants at the Monitor Farm Clinic during a training session. PHOTO BY GEOFFREY LUGAJU

Yet the best strides seem to have been made in dairy enterprise handled by Dr Constantine Bakyusa Katongole and Precious Taremwa.

"The caliber of the participants has been impressive - we had the starting, experienced farmers plus youths," Katongole revealed.

"We trained on ways how farmers can get the better dairy from their cows, how to manage three stages of milk production, cow welfare, breed selection, zero grazing and handling the dry-off period (time when the cow expects the next calf)."

Other facilitators such as Mr Julius Ahangaana (passion fruit), Mr Musa Lumu (coffee) and Prof Ssettumba Mukasa (bananas) made the clinic a rich experience.

According to Monitor Publications Limited (MPL) marketing manager, Ms Sarah Nalule Walakira, 700 participants attended.

"It was gratifying seeing prominent people like Justice Remmy Kasule, Justice Esther Mayambala Kisaakye and Resident District Commissioner Fred Bamwine attend the clinic. It gives us the push to carry on with the farm clinics," she said.

700

Attendance. The number of participants who attended the Farm Clinic

The four Farm Clinic partners- Agricultural Business Initiative (aBi), Heifer International, Post Bank and Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) - had a strong presence as were the 30 exhibitors.

In her remarks, Ms Flora Aduk, the *Daily Monitor* features editor for weekend editions, thanked the participants, especially the youth who

dominated the clinic saying the seventh edition for making it a massive success.

"The clinic attracted many young people, showing that today with the high unemployment rates what was always considered 'dirty' work is much more lucrative," Ms Aduk said.

Participants speak out

Some participants went through all the five enterprises but it mostly came down to priorities.

"I came for dairy, bananas and piggery but got more than I expected. I have shared contacts, gained valuable experience and now how to go big on my piggery farm in Kyanja and banana plantation in Kyampisi," RDC Fred Bamwine said.

Mr Paul Watsosi from Lusaze was delighted to learn the art of intercropping and preparing a farm. He vowed to start one soon in his home district of Mbale.

Landowner, UNRA locked in compromise