



Gardening. A farmer prunes his tomatoes and cabbage garden in Lira District last year. FILE PHOTO

Unpredictable rains worry farmers

Concern. The leaders think if the rains delay more, farmers will become lazy which may lead to food shortage in future.

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LIRA. Most parts of Lango Sub-region used to experience heavy rains in March before the area started experiencing changes in weather patterns. However, this has made farmers weary of planting again.

Around this time, farmers would begin planting soya beans, maize, ground nuts and sunflower.

But farmers are uncertain about the variable rainfall pattern though many appear to be so much prepared to engage in agriculture.

In Bala Sub-county, Kole District, hope is fading away for farmers as majority have turned to cassava growing, which is drought resistant, because of the unpredictable rainfall.

The Bala former LC3 chairman, Mr Caesar Alaju, says farmers have opened their gardens but are frustrated by the unpredictable rainfall.

"We used to experience heavy rains at the beginning of March but it is not the case today," he says.

According to Mr Alaju, many farmers are already demoralised.

"They think if they take risk to plant, a lot of crops would not germinate and this will affect production and in the end, many people will starve," he says.

Ms Anna Agnes Arach of Lira University, says farmers were caught unaware on Saturday, when parts of Lango received unexpected rains past midnight.

Unaware

"Serious farming has not started yet because the rains have caught people unaware. I have not planted anything yet," she says.

Although cassava appears good, Mr Alaju says many farmers cannot afford the skyrocketing price of cassava cuttings.

A bag of cassava stems is

EXPERT VIEW

Seasoned farmers and agribusiness experts early this year predicted harder times for farmers emanating from the unpredictable rain patterns and the worrying trend of climate change the country is experiencing.

In unison, they believe that for any farmer to improve his productivity this year, one should have a stable water source that can outlive the dry spell.

sold between Shs25,000 and Shs30,000 in Kole, Oyam and Alebtong districts.

Mr Bonny Odyek Macmoko, the LC3 chairman of Aboke Sub-county in Kole District, says the unpredictable rainfall is also promoting laziness among farmers.

"A number of them are now taking advantage of unreliable rainfall to engage in unproductive ventures such as alcoholism and gambling," he says.

"If the trend continues, many

households will fail to feed their children," he adds.

Meanwhile, Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) predicts that overall, there is an increased probability for near normal rainfall over much of Uganda except in western Uganda, which is expected to receive above normal rainfall.

Districts in eastern and south-eastern Lake Victoria such as Jinja, Mayuge, Kamuli, Iganga, Bugiri, Namayingo, Luuka, Namutumba, Buyende, Kaliro, Busia and Tororo have been experiencing dry conditions since December 2017.

UNMA predicts that the peak of rainfall in this region is expected around mid to late April through early May. The cessation is expected around late May. Overall, UNMA predicts that this region has a high chance of receiving near normal rainfall.

UNMA further predicts the onset of normal seasonal rainfall in eastern parts of northern region in districts such as Lira, Alebtong, Kitgum, Agago, Otuke, Pader, Kole, and Dokolo.

Moderate relaxation of rains is expected around mid June.