

Say no to bush burning, save the environment

EDITOR: Fire accidents have become rampant in Bujenje county of late. This is mainly within the sub counties of Budongo and Bwijanga. Both sub counties lie within the sugarcane growing zones under Kinyara Sugar Works. This has been a problem for many years and there seems to be no permanent solution to-date. The fires are common, especially during the dry spell.

Some of these fires have been accidental, intentional and due to recklessness by the community and the cane cutters themselves.

A recent case was attributed to a cane cutter, who allegedly after smoking carelessly dropped a cigarette filter, setting part of the plantation and sugarcane which was being harvested that day ablaze.

Bush burning is culturally embraced by some societies. As long as it is dry, burning must take place. Some people burn while hunting. This is done to drive animals to the desired direction. Some people do maliciously.

The farmers and the sugar company continue

to lose hundreds of hectares every dry season, lots of losses will continue to be registered and untold suffering. Equally the economy will suffer a set back since its export will reduce.

People neighbouring cane farmers have also continued to suffer the impact of these fires directly and indirectly as they lose property including food crops in the gardens and in the granaries. Grass thatched houses have been torched, domestic animals like goats have also perished during fire incidence.

Where the cases are well investigated, compensations have been done and compromise reached. Where the offenders cannot pay or remain at large, conflicts have continued to escalate.

Wildlife has also been lost due to these fires. This is both within the plantations and outside. To save the environment, there is need to say no to fires.

The Masindi district administration authority has forms which persons intending to burn must fill in advance and submit to the local authorities indicating

where and the intention of burning. These forms are available up to the village local councils.

Nevertheless, nothing much has been achieved since people do not bother to pick these forms and have them filled. More so, there is need to campaign against reckless fires as well as have clear laws against bush burning. The efforts by the district authorities and the sugar company against bush fires should be embraced. More meetings should be held, especially at the grassroots in order to minimise frequent fires.

Now that the dry spell is still on and farmers are busy preparing their gardens targeting the start of the rainy season, it is advisable to take caution while burning or simply say no to burning because of its negative impacts on the environment and peoples' livelihoods. For a good and healthy environment as well as embracing the growth of the economy, this act must stop and culprits dealt with accordingly.

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