

India government donates sh1.2b bio-pesticide laboratory

SERERE

By Godfrey Ojore

A laboratory that will be used by scientists for testing and developing organic pesticides has been launched at the National Semi-Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI) in Serere district.

The laboratory, worth sh1.2b, is a donation to National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) by the Indian government.

"We shall be shifting from inorganic chemicals, that in some cases have been harmful to humans and crops, to bio-pesticides that are even friendly to the environment," Julius Mukalazi, the coordinator for the competitive grant under NARO, said.

He represented the director general of NARO at the launch

BETWEEN THE LINES:

Experts say the lab will help curb fake products on the market and will be used to manufacture pesticides that can effectively fight the armyworm.

on Monday.

Mukalazi explained that they were to design research programmes intended to produce pesticides for industrial production.

"This is one of the options we can use in the control of the armyworm, other than chemical herbicides that tend to be resistant to some of the chemicals on the market," Mukalazi explained.

The Indian government trained 35 scientists in the management of the laboratory



Kibazanga (left), Shankar (second-left) and other officials exchange documents after launching the bio-pesticide laboratory in Serere on Monday. Photo by Godfrey Ojore

that also has the capacity to test soil samples, plant samples and make bio-fertilisers.

The state minister for agriculture, Christopher Kibazanga, said farmers

have been faced with the challenge of purchasing chemical pesticides in the open market, which have ended up destroying their crops.

"Having a laboratory that can

use local material to control pests and fertilise land will curb fake chemical drugs on the open market," Kibazanga said.

Shri Ravi Shankar, the Indian

High Commissioner to Uganda said his country has been a close partner to Uganda in its quest for national development and economic growth.

"Our co-operation with Uganda is not only in capacity building and human resource development, but setting up institutions and donating equipment that support agriculture," Shankar said.

India also supports Uganda in the health and education sectors.

NaSARRI was built in the early 1920s and is among the 16 research institutions in the country.

The institute's director, Dr Michael Ugen, appealed to the Government to rehabilitate the institute and address the challenge of unreliable power that forces them to rely on power from a generator.